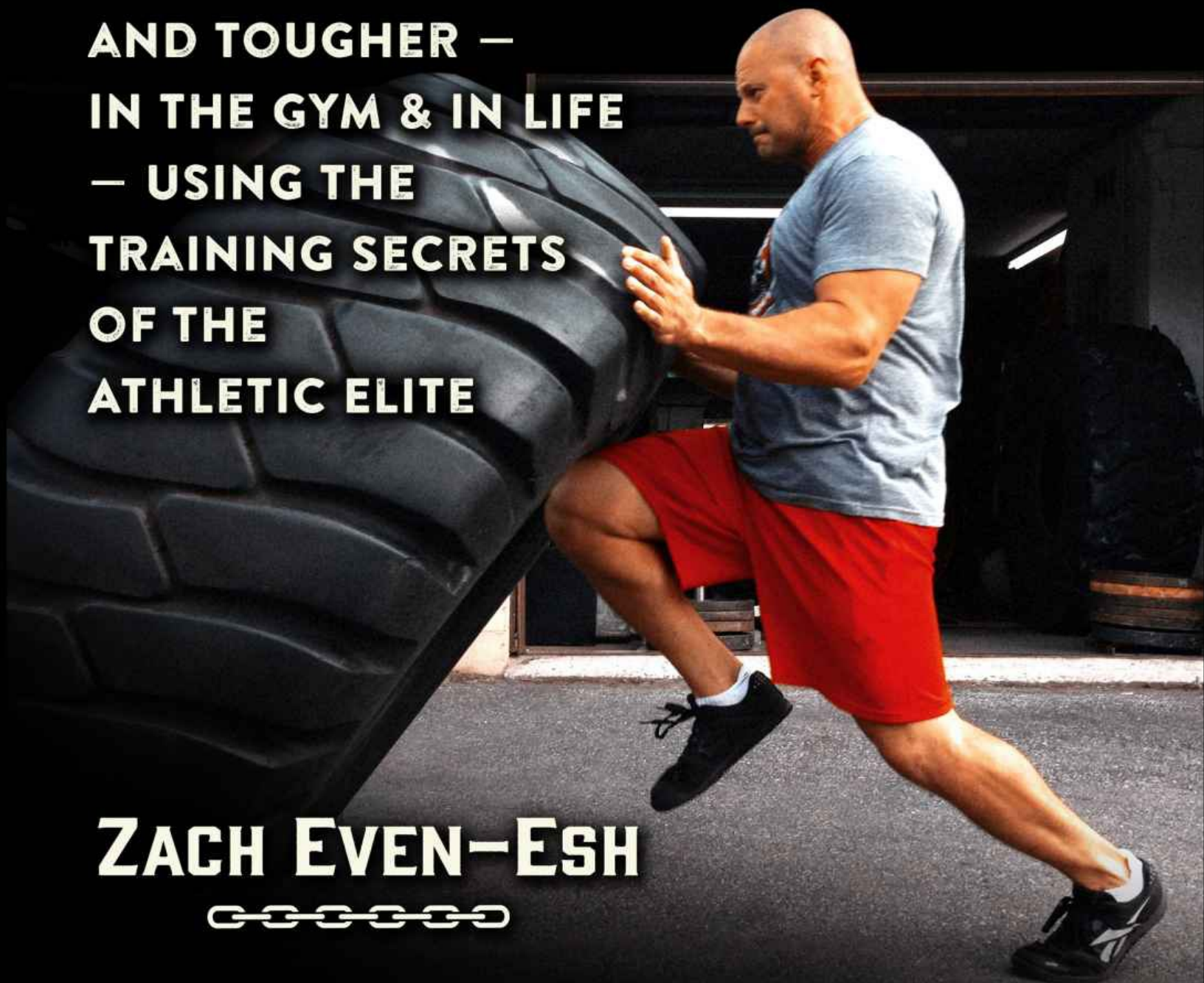


THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF UNDERGROUND STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

**HOW TO GET STRONGER
AND TOUGHER —
IN THE GYM & IN LIFE
— USING THE
TRAINING SECRETS
OF THE
ATHLETIC ELITE**

ZACH EVEN-ESH



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ZACH EVEN-ESH

– PRAISE FOR –

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF UNDERGROUND STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

“When it comes to functional strength and conditioning—old school style—Zach Even-Esh has been there, done that. Zach is a master at developing young athletes who not only become world class at their sport, but also develop the strength of character to be successful at whatever they choose in life. I highly recommend this book, as it will open your eyes to reality-based training.”

—CDR MARK DIVINE, founder SEALFIT and Unbeatable Mind, NYT bestselling author *8 Weeks to SEALFIT* and *The Way of the SEAL*.

“At Spartan, we have always said the world needs a thorough encyclopedia on strength and conditioning. Whether it is our own athletes attending our races, moms, or even the elite special forces we speak to, everyone is looking for an edge. Zach’s Encyclopedia is exactly what today’s society needs to build a stronger mind, body and life, just as we encourage here at Spartan. The inspirational life lessons shared in this book along with these training methods are what make this book powerful and timeless. You owe it to yourself to read this book if you want to change your life.”

—JOE DE SENA, founder, The Spartan Race.

“If there’s a hardcore, super-functional tool or tactic for maximizing strength, speed or muscle, it’s here—bodyweight, kettlebells, barbells, tires, ropes, sandbags, kegs and sleds. The bodyweight section alone is worth more than the price of the book—it’s a ‘must read’ for calisthenics fans. What interests me particularly is Zach’s emphasis on bodyweight for athleticism and conditioning, as well as raw strength. There are dozens of very, very powerful drills and unique approaches here. I’ve no doubt this book will be considered the bible of old school athletic strength training over the coming decades.”

—PAUL WADE, author, *Convict Conditioning*

*“No book combines the old-school methods of strength training and muscle-building with the new science of performance enhancement and athletic conditioning better than **The Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning**. And no author delivers his knowledge with more heart and passion than Zach Even-Esh. This ‘bible of strength’ is an inspiring must-read for every athlete, coach and fitness enthusiast of any age who wants to help themselves or others get an edge on the competition and become bigger, stronger, faster and tougher.”*

—TOM VENUTO, *author, Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle*

"From the minute I began reading I was completely captivated. The mixture of life lessons along with powerful workout information is what makes this book truly phenomenal and one that belongs on any strength enthusiast's book shelf."

—AJ ROBERTS, *2x All-Time Powerlifting World Record Holder*

"This big book has a lot of soul. I love how Zach's unique voice comes through. I love the mix of bodybuilding and wrestling and power training and farm-boy strength combined with the sincere earnestness of his ongoing quest for continual physical improvement. I love his crazed, gonzo approach towards fitness and strength and functionality. Zach has thrown a big lasso around a hell-of-a-lot of athletic modes. Zach has transformed himself, and ergo, he knows of what he speaks. Best of all, most important of all, he gets irrefutable results for his people. I love the functional, uber-fit physiques of Zach students, the final finished products. In one word, Zach, Awesome!"

—MARTY GALLAGHER, *author, The Purposeful Primitive*

"Books like Zach Even-Esh's new work, The Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning, simply aren't written any more. I felt like I was back in 1964 thumbing through Strength and Health getting the answers to strength: it's the basics, it's hard work and there is a funny story that needs to be told to get me to understand the simplicity of it all. If you are new, this book is your one-stop-shop for just about everything. You get every tool, every idea and practically every mistake as Zach takes us on his journey. The sections on elite athletes are told as clearly as possible and I think I coached 'Strong and Useless,' too. I really enjoyed that section as we all face the same obstacles as we try to figure how to translate the relatively straight line in the weight room into the chaos of the athletic field. Zach gives you these answers."

Certainly, it is fine in practice the way Zach explores training, but the book is just fun to read, too. It's a hands-on book from a hands-on coach and you get the feeling you know everybody he is talking about in each story. The book needs a two-way radio: 'Yeah, I know that guy!' It's a great book that will open up a few eyes and maybe a few windows in your training. Enjoy."

—DAN JOHN, *author, Never Let Go*

"Zach's wisdom is both bold and heartwarming at the same time. Besides a touching, often humorous story, what Zach provides is an incredibly comprehensive manual which details not only strength and conditioning, but also speed training, muscle building, feats of strength and more. Zach provides years worth of material in this fantastic resource."

—DANNY KAVADLO, *author, Diamond-Cut Abs*

"I have been a strength coach for over 30 years and this by far is one of the most powerful strength training books I have read. It's a tool that every strength coach, new or old, every person who trains new or old, should have in their toolbox. This book will be required reading for all my trainers and athletes from this point on."

—COACH JOHN MCKENNA, Athletic Performance Director, Notre Dame High School, Lawrenceville, NJ

"Zach Even-Esh throws down the gauntlet—challenging you to live strong, think strong, and be strong. The Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning inspires and educates allowing you to elevate your training both mentally and physically. The information in this book will not only make you a better athlete, but also a better person."

—JON BRUNEY, author, Neuro-Mass

"Everything you need to know about getting stronger and mentally tough is covered in detail in this book. If you are looking for a shortcut, or don't have a true desire to work as hard as possible, this book is not for you. This book is all about embracing the effort, doing your best, inspiring everyone around you, and being the consummate leader of your social circle, all while becoming the strongest version of yourself. This book is loaded with inspirational stories and informational programs that work. Zach's training methods are intense and his passion is unparalleled; if you want to succeed, this book is for you."

—MATT WICHLINSKI, Strength Coach, WWE Performance Center

"The Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning should be in the library of every trainer and coach. Zach Even-Esh has filled his book with the kind of wisdom that can only be obtained from years in the trenches making mistakes and learning from them. Zach outlines techniques and tactics to build not only useable strength, but well-rounded athleticism that enhances performance and provides resilience from injury. The ultimate report card for a coach is results, not knowledge of theory. Zach gets results for real people."

—CHRIS HARDY, DO, MPH CSCS, Physician, trainer, co-author **Strong Medicine**

"This book clearly speaks to the duality of strength training; the internal and the external. Zach first provides a compelling rationale for the pursuit of strength and then delivers, as promised in the title, an encyclopedic manual on exactly how to attain it. Zach covers the mindset and modalities of true strength building. It's all here; barbell and dumbbell work, odd-object lifts, calisthenics, kettlebells, ropes and running. I've seen Zach in action with his athletes. He is 'for real' and so are his methods. If you want to coach

yourself or others to greatness, you need this book!"

—MIKE GILLETTE, Performance Coach, Member Martial Arts Masters Hall-of-Fame

"When I first met Zach I was 135 pounds soaking wet and a sub-500 wrestler. In a little more than a year I packed on 15 pounds of muscle and was pound-for-pound one of the strongest guys on my wrestling team. The underground program transformed me physically and mentally from zero wins my freshman year of college, to having successful junior and senior seasons as a captain of the Rutgers wrestling team. Not only did I benefit athletically from the underground methods, but Zach's approach to training, coaching, and life played a major role in detouring my career path as I completed college. My experience at the Underground helped inspire me to pursue a career that allows me to cultivate training environments that constantly challenge athletes of all ages to be 'comfortable being uncomfortable' as Zach says.

The Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning is the secret formula people have been searching for, and it's finally compiled into one place for everyone to see. I personally experienced the Underground methods, and have seen the transformation every one of my athletes has experienced. There's no doubt that Underground Strength and Conditioning will have a major influence on my athletes' programming for years to come."

—MICHAEL DEMARCO, Motives Movement – Owner, The Helm CrossFit – Owner, Rutgers Wrestling 12

"If you are a fitness or strength professional or a serious fitness enthusiast then you must own this book. Read it cover to cover again and again. Over the last 20 years I have interviewed and trained over 1,000 trainers and coaches and I can tell you that there is a powerful, not so obvious difference between a good coach and an OUTSTANDING coach. However, knowing this will transform your life and those you help massively. This is what you will discover in The Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning. It is worth its weight in gold."

—BILLY BECK III, MET-Rx World's Best Personal Trainer, Personal Fitness Professional Magazine Trainer of the Year, International Presenter, Author, Lean and Mean: Fat Burning Secrets

"Holy s**t, I gotta get up and go train right now! That's all I could think as I read through Zach's new book. It got me so fired up I couldn't sit still. It's honest, insightful, touching, and inspirational. Zach's passion bleeds through every page and will make you want to not only train harder, but man up in every aspect of your life."

—JASON FERRUGGIA, author, Muscle Gaining Secrets 2.0

"Zach Even-Esh's Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning provides a

very resourceful guide to proper training and most importantly a call to action that you never miss a workout again! Zach guides you through how to train hard whether you have the luxury of a gym or the good fortune of a stone, a friend, a playground, a picnic table, a tire, a sandbag, a keg, or—heck —the truck that's parked in your driveway.”

—JOE DI STEFANO, BS, CSCS, PES, CES, Co-creator, Spartan Race's SGX Certification

“Zach not only shares his deep knowledge of training in his book but also shares his journey on how he got there. This is the book I wish I had read in my early years of training and am now ecstatic to have it on my bookshelf. I 100% recommend this book to anyone desiring to find their passion. Zach is a true inspiration and I am honored to also call him my friend.”

—MICHAEL BLEDSOE, CEO *Fitr.tv*, *Barbell Shrugged* Podcast, *Faction Strength & Conditioning*, *CrossFit Memphis*

*“It is my pleasure and honor to recommend and endorse the publication of **The Encyclopedia of Underground Strength and Conditioning** by Zach Even-Esh. As Zach's high school Wrestling Coach, I marvel at his growth, development, and maturation into an outstanding expert on strength and conditioning. His knowledge, expertise, and motivational skills as a teacher and coach shine throughout the book. His dedication, intensity and zeal are so obvious. His own life story and work ethic will serve as a great role model to the numerous young athletes who are fortunate to fall under his mentoring. The many exercises, pictures, and schedules will be an invaluable aid to any young athlete, as well as other teachers and coaches, who desires to improve in strength and conditioning. An outstanding publication!”*

—KENNETH PAGACH, Edison High School Wrestling Coach (NJ)1964 – 1994, National Wrestling Hall of Fame

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF UNDERGROUND STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

⚡ ZACH EVEN-ESH ⚡

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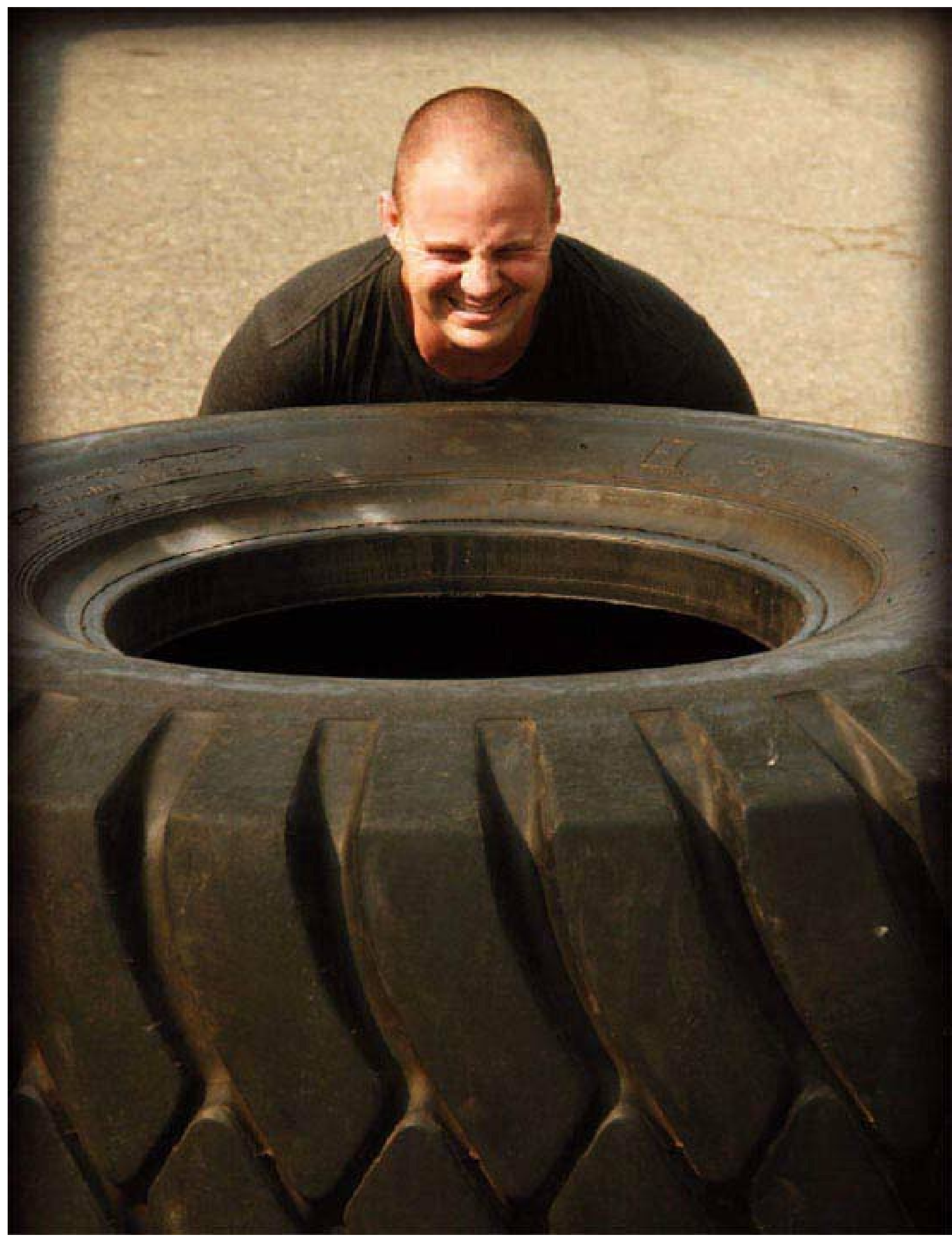
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— DEDICATION —



This book first and foremost is dedicated to my son & daughter, Ethan & Summer. Until you were brought into my life, I didn't truly understand WHY I must be strong. Every time I train, I think of both of you and the thought inspires me to constantly grow stronger in mind, body, and spirit. I will always be strong enough to carry you both if you ever need me, no matter the circumstance. You are the greatest gifts of my life.

Waking up early, staying up late, and doing what others consider "hard" or "tough" never feels challenging at all when I think of you both. You have given me strength, love, joy, and happiness in a way that I could never have imagined possible. My words can never do justice to the joy and love you have brought to my life.

I hope that one day, when you read this book, it makes both of you proud of me. Your happiness, health, and love mean the world to me. This book would not have been possible without you in my life.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to my wife and best friend, Danielle. You motivated me, believed in me, and encouraged me to share my story with the world. You supported me during this journey, from backyard and garage workouts in our very first home, and every day since. I love you and our kids more than my words can ever describe.

Thank you to my older brother, Eilon, for introducing me to bodybuilding and wrestling. These 2 things have saved me and given me a sense of purpose that is indescribable. Thanks to my younger bro, Rami, for standing by my side through every endeavor since day one. To my Mom & Aba, thank you for supporting my addiction to bodybuilding & training since day one and every single day since then. Your love and support have always been unconditional.

Special thanks go to my high school wrestling coaches: Coach Pagach, Coach Parra, Coach Duhigg, Coach Gerba, and Coach Mizrahi. You taught me critical life skills that I always carry with me: commitment, intensity, pain tolerance, mental toughness, physical toughness, optimism, work ethic, and the ability to get comfortable being uncomfortable in ALL endeavors, not just wrestling. Without wrestling and without your coaching I would never be the man I am today.

Thank you to ALL members and parents of The Underground Strength Gym, a.k.a. Team Underground. All of you make me incredibly proud, and have driven me to constantly pursue excellence. Without you this book would never have been possible.

Thank you to the family of Certified Underground Strength Coaches all around the world for trusting me to help guide you in training, business, and life. I am far from perfect, but

your trust in me inspires me to be greater every single day so I can share with you.

To all the fans of The Underground on the Internet, near and far, you are closer to me than you can imagine. No matter how far away you are, whether we have met in person or not, I feel a strong bond with you. Your daily messages have pushed me since the beginning to strive for greater accomplishments every day. Dating all the way back to the days when the big name coaches laughed at me, you stood behind me and encouraged me to move onward and upward. I am forever grateful.

To Alwyn Cosgrove, Ryan Lee & Jason Ferruggia; My gratitude can never do justice to how your guidance helped my passion come to life.

To my strength coach friends, you know who you are. I have leaned on you for support and asked you for advice countless times. You have helped me far beyond mere training advice. Without your support and friendship there never would have been a book. You know who you are, and just as you had my back while asking for nothing in return, know that I will always be there to return the favor for you.

To Derek Brigham, the ultimate graphic designer, your eye for design and bringing my work to a level of inspiration and life is unmatched. Without your artistic vision none of my work would have ever been taken seriously. Sometimes I feel you understand my message better than I do myself.

Last but not least, a special thanks goes to John Du Cane. My introduction to some of the most powerful training methods came about through my learning and education from Dragon Door. Thank you for believing in me, trusting me, and giving me the opportunity to share my story and my methods. You stood behind me every step of the way, through thick and thin, never doubting or rushing me, only encouraging me and giving me the opportunity to be myself without reserve.

Live The Code

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Zach Even-Esh'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Zach Even-Esh

— INTRODUCTION —

FOREWORD BY COACH ETHAN REEVE

 I am honored Zach Even-Esh asked me to write the introduction to his new book. With humility and trepidation, I hesitate to write about myself. His instructions were to write about my training as a wrestler, and how I progressed in my strength training through time. With these instructions, I felt it best to travel all the way back to my elementary school days into the early 1960s. There were no strength coaches back then. Athletes were trained with sport coaches conducting strength training sessions. If they didn't have a sport coach or their sport coach couldn't help them master strength training, they trained by themselves.

I feel very fortunate to have been raised in an era with no computers, no cable television, and no cell phones. Life was much simpler. There were fewer choices and complications. In school there was reading, writing, arithmetic, science, history, music, art, and physical education. Physical education was very important in those days, and was required for all. We had one hour of physical education five days each week. Before doing our sport activity in physical education, we all had to stretch, tumble, toss medicine balls, do calisthenics, climb ropes, crawl, run, and jump. It was very structured and disciplined.

It was in physical education where I excelled. Moving and being physically active helped me perform better academically. Being physically active helped me to think and reason more effectively. I was one of those kids you would call a squirmer. In fact, I would squirm so much in my chair I would wear out the seat of my pants. I loved to move. I had to move. It was in my DNA. 

In the third grade I was running one mile each day. By the sixth grade I was running six miles each day. It was exhilarating. I was addicted to running. Jim Ryan, the great miler from the University of Kansas, was my idol. Because of him I wanted to be an Olympian in track and field. That is until I entered the seventh grade.

 In the seventh grade, I played running back and middle linebacker in football, guard in basketball, and ran the ½ mile in track. During the winter, we had basketball practices in the mornings before school. So I was also able to practice varsity wrestling at the high school after classes. Some of the high school wrestlers convinced the wrestling coach to ask me to try out for the varsity team. I "tried out" and won a varsity spot at the 95 lbs. weight class. However, we soon learned that rules prevented me from being a six-year letterman in any particular sport. I was only permitted to practice wrestling with the varsity team my 7th grade year. I did continue participating in all four sports in the 8th and 9th grades.

It was in 7th grade that the wrestling coach told me that if I wanted to be a good wrestler I must do a lot of pushups. The problem was, he gave me no guidance or protocol as to how many total pushups, how many sets, how many reps, the right frequency, or the timing or number of rest periods. I chose my number: 500. After three months I was performing 500 pushups every day. I did 500 pushups seven days a week for five years. I rarely ever did more than 25 pushups in a set. My favorite routine was 50 sets of 10 reps starting a new set every 60 seconds. In fifty minutes I was finished with 500 pushups. I loved doing pushups. By doing pushups this way it insured that each pushup was of perfect quality. At the bottom position, the chest must touch the floor. At the top, arms are fully extended with a one-second pause.

Performing pushups, along with some dips, Hindu squats, leg lifts, chin-ups, and some light barbell circuits, helped me to place state runner-up in New Mexico and state champion in Ohio in wrestling. I was fortunate enough to win a full scholarship in wrestling to the University of Tennessee. During those years we also did farm work during harvesting season for hay. Farm work was a test of toughness: chopping cotton, baling hay, slopping hogs, digging post holes, laying irrigation pipe, etc. This is the original "old school" training. We found that our better athletes were the ones that worked with their dads doing manual labor like farming, roofing, carpentry, and laying bricks. I searched for ways to toughen myself up. The tougher the better!

My first two years of college wrestling were productive enough for me to win the Southeast Conference tournament each year. However, I really wanted to be an NCAA All-American. At that time, you had to place in the top 6 in a particular weight class to be awarded All-American status. I did not place in the top 6 my first two years. During these first two years of college, I realized I needed to make some drastic changes in my style of wrestling and strength training in order to become NCAA All-American.

In college wrestling, the champion wrestlers have mastered all parts of the takedown. The best collegiate wrestlers are takedown artists. They not only master the skill of the takedown, but are also more athletic in the standing position. I had a lot of work to do in mastering takedowns. However, it worked very well with my new discovery — Olympic weightlifting.

Toward the end of my sophomore year, I concluded that since I needed to be more athletic on my feet, I needed to find strength training that improved my athletic ability. The power clean was my choice. And boy did I feel the difference in my wrestling! My strength, power, athleticism, and confidence improved immensely.

At the University of Tennessee, there were two weight rooms for athletes. One was a Nautilus machine weight room. The other room was for free weights only. In the free weight room there were two platforms with only metal plates (no rubber bumpers). The bars were old, bent, and rusty. This was the place for me. Only wrestlers, throwers, and sprinters lifted in the free weight room back then. I learned the technique of the power

clean by watching throwers like Tom Stock and Phil Olsen.

For those last two years of college I had a specific routine I did seven days a week. There was no boredom because I loved to power clean, and I knew it helped me become a better athlete/wrestler. During every workout, I performed 100 power cleans supersetted with 100 chin ups. When performing the power cleans I used the weight equal to my body-weight for that day. I would do 10 power cleans followed by 10 chin-ups. I repeated this until I accomplished 10 sets of 10 reps on power cleans and 10 sets of 10 reps on chin ups. My goal each day was to complete all 200 reps in 15 to 18 minutes. Afterward, depending on my energy, I would do front squat, push press, stiff legged deadlift, or regular deadlift. Finally, five days each week, I ran one mile of bleacher sprints.

After almost every wrestling practice, I recruited another wrestler to allow me to perform 100+ takedowns on him. The combination of athletic lifting and high-quality repetition takedown drills helped me to become an NCAA All-American and SEC Champion each of my last two years at the University of Tennessee. To this day, I know the best way to make yourself into a champion is to perform thousands of repetitions of the skill of your particular sport at match or game speed. Nothing will get you there quicker. All strength training is performed to enhance the technique of the skill. It is all about the transference to sport. Quality high-repetition drilling of technique at the intensity and speed needed for competition is the single best way to succeed in sport. No other training for sport comes close. Strength coaches should be mindful that all strength training should enhance and develop general strength, power, flexibility, mental toughness, and athleticism. It is the duty of the athlete and sport coach to transfer these abilities to the techniques of sport skill and tactics of sport.

In my thirty-five years of coaching wrestling and strength training, I have worked with Olympic champions, World Champions, NCAA champions, All Americans, NFL and NBA players, conference champions, state champions, and medalists of all kinds in many sports. There are two qualities that stand out in each one of these champion athletes. They were coachable and fierce competitors.



Coachable athletes are humble and open to accepting and performing as the coach says. They put their best efforts toward doing as instructed, even when they disagree with or do not understand the instructions. It helps an athlete to focus all their power when they are humble. Humble athletes' minds are more open to learning and instruction. When you are humble, you realize you don't know everything. You listen to your coaches because you realize the coaches are there to help you maximize your potential, to help you become a champion. If you are not naturally a fierce competitor, I can help you if you are coachable. There were many times I did not agree with my coaches. However, I did whatever the coach said without question. Years later I came to realize how much I learned from all of my coaches by simply allowing myself to be coached. The great athletes I have worked with were like sponges for information. They wanted to be champions and would listen to every word.

Is the strength training that I performed best for today's athletes? No. Are there better ways to mix in your lifts, sets, reps, intensities, and rest? Absolutely. We are evolving. This is where Zach Even-Esh comes in. To progress, you must evolve. You must change. If you don't evolve, you will be left behind.

However, there are some "old school" ways of training that still work. Hard work, smart work, discipline, focusing, attention to detail, mental toughness, and coachability are still the stuff of champions. It is the great strength coach who can blend the proven older methods with the science of newer methods. I see this evolution each and every day with Zach. He is constantly evolving. He is blending the proven old with the new. Read and be coachable, and dedicate your attention and best efforts to what he has written in this book. You will become better for it.

BLOOD, STONES, & TEARS

I was 3 or 4 years old, but it seems like it was only 3 or 4 minutes ago. The year? 1978 or 1979. I lived in an apartment complex in Fords, NJ. My older brother and I were in the pool, throwing our toy dinosaurs up in the air, trying to catch them, having a good ol' time.

I accidentally threw my toy dinosaur out of the pool and over the fence. Outside the fence was a wooded area, and my brother and I ran to get my dinosaur. How we got on the other side of the fence is all a blur to me, but what happened when we began looking for the dinosaur is crystal clear.



I always watched The Hulk with Lou Ferrigno on TV and was obsessed with muscles. When my Dad cut his jeans into shorts I put the jeans on my arms pretending they were muscles.

We weren't sure where the dinosaur was as we walked side by side, scanning the ground covered heavy by leaves on this perfect summer day. In a split second, our moment of laughter and happiness came to a screeching halt when I got hit in the face by something.

That something was hard and it hurt.... it really freaking hurt.

BOOM! I got hit again.... and again.... and again.

I began crying and screaming in pain, rocks hitting my face time and again, 1 inch below my right eye. In the far distance I saw the "bad kids" from the apartments throwing rocks

at me. We were always told to stay away from these kids, and now I knew why. This assault was happening at the speed of light. In the pool one second, having a blast, and what only seemed like moments later, being attacked with stones. I began grabbing at the ground and throwing anything in my hands their way, desperately hoping I could hit them back.



Yep, that's the scar.

I remember the exact thoughts running through my head. I was screaming at them to stop, yet questioning how they could keep hitting me with such perfect aim, despite being so far away. Every time I grabbed at the ground to throw a stone at them my hands came up empty with nothing but leaves.

Finally, my brother freaked out and grabbed me, pulling me to run away and escape to some form of safety. We began to run, and we never looked back as our voices screamed with frantic cries.

As we were climbing over the fence to get home, one of the teenagers who was throwing rocks at me ran up to us and stopped us on the fence. There we were, the 3 of us hanging on the fence, side by side, as he asked me, "Zach, is it bad? Are you hurt bad?"

I was crying as he looked at my face with a frightened look. And as I clung on to that fence, I screamed my answer, YES! I recall the shocked look on his face when he saw what he and his friends had done to my face. My brother and I ran home and told my parents what happened, as I cried out of fear and shock from what just happened. I asked my father, "Am I hurt bad? Does it look bad? Show me in the mirror!"

My father lifted me up in the bathroom so I could see my face in the mirror, and my face was covered in blood. I was crying so much that I was wiping my face and eyes from the tears, spreading the blood all over my face. I was rushed to the hospital where my brother told me, "Zach, don't let them touch you." I cried as they stitched my face up, right under my eye. I remember leaving the hospital with a surgical glove blown up with a smiley face on it.

That is my earliest memory of life. That is the first time I remember learning to fight back without backing down, like a Pit Bull. If my brother hadn't pulled me away, I don't know if I would have my right eye today. He saved me that day.

That day taught me that even when you are out-numbered and smaller than your "competition," you don't ever back down. When the dust settles and clears, it is those who stand up for what they believe in that rise above.

LIVE TO RIDE, RIDE TO LIVE

When I was about five, my parents moved us out of the apartments and into our first home in Edison, NJ. It was a great neighborhood filled with kids the same age as my older brother and me.

We all lived for playing outside. We did it all — BMX riding, street hockey, basketball, man hunt, football, skateboarding, and any other activity we could think of.

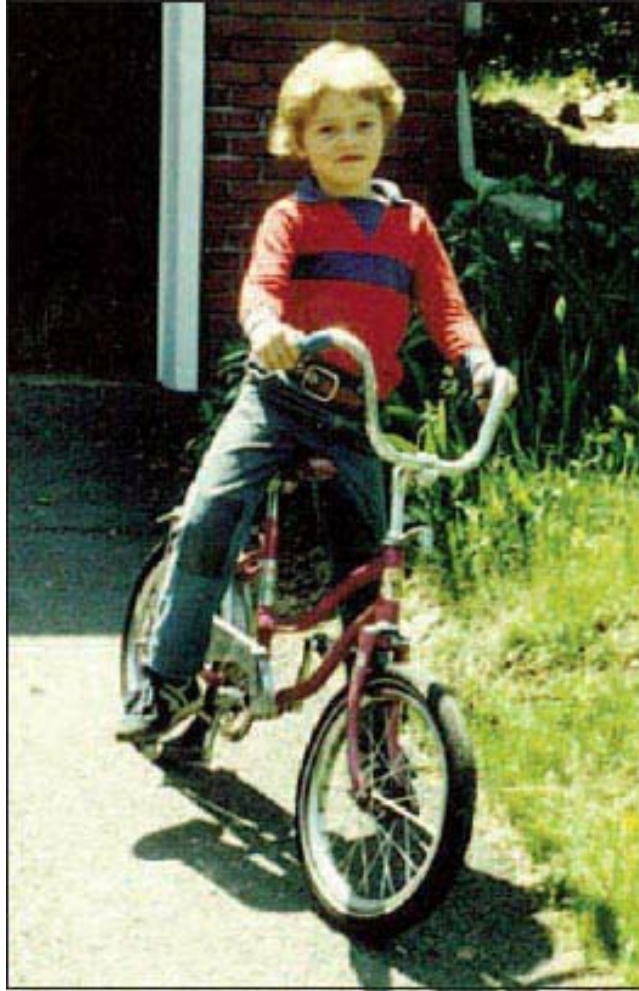
The activity I loved the most was riding my bike. My first BMX bike was a used red bike that my Dad brought home after work one day. All the kids on the block had new bikes. I got a used bike. I was psyched to finally have a bike like “everyone else.” The older kids made fun of my bike because it was used and theirs was new.



My Dad told me he bought the bike from another Dad, whose son was a BMX racer. I’m not sure if that was the truth or if he was telling me that to make me feel better. The bike had no stickers or decals on it so I couldn’t tell the other kids what kind of bike I was riding.

The type of bike you rode as a kid was like a status symbol. Back then, the best bikes to ride were from companies like GT, Mongoose, and Redline. Although I wasn’t riding on a name brand bike — let alone a new bike — I was in love with riding. I rode that bike immediately after school until dinner time every week night. On weekends, I was up early

and rode all day long. I went to bed at night thinking of what I would do the next day — riding my bike, jumping over curbs and small ramps my friends and I would build using plywood, milk crates, and anything else we could find in our garages.



My first bike.

In school I had a difficult time focusing because all I could think about was riding my bike. The time of year didn't matter. I rode my bike when it was raining and snowing. In the dead of winter with snow on the ground, I rode my bike.

As I got older and other kids got new bikes for their birthdays or for Christmas, I still had my no name BMX bike. I was in 3rd grade now and I had heard about being able to make money with a paper route.

Someone called our house and spoke to my Dad about this job that young kids can have. The man visited our house, explained to my Dad and me how I would deliver the daily paper, collect money on weekends, and make money through my tips.

I began immediately with the goal of saving money to buy a new bike at the local bike shop. I would deliver the paper before or after school while riding my bike. On Sunday, my Dad would help me deliver the big Sunday newspaper by driving around the block in his

station wagon, hatch back open as I sat on the edge and he drove around slowly so we could stop at each house.

Every weekend I collected and added up my tips. As my money collection grew, I began visiting the Ford's Bike Shop on an almost daily basis. I was eyeing up the chrome and blue Predator. It was an awesome looking bike, and I was literally counting the days and losing sleep over when I would be able to buy this bike.

Every time I went to the bike shop I would sit on the bike and tell my friends, "This is gonna be my bike!!" The owner must have thought I was insane. That's how normal people view passionate people. When you're passionate about something, you can't turn it off. You're always thinking about that one thing. 

I put the bike I wanted on layaway, and week after week I stopped by the bike shop and give the owner all the cash I earned in tips from delivering papers. Week by week, I got closer to getting my first new bike!

After 3 months of saving up money, my Dad contributed the final portion to help me buy my bike, the Predator. I remember my Dad drove home early from work and got home in the early afternoon, as opposed to his typical 6 or 7 pm arrival.

As soon as we paid for the bike, I was hauling ass down the street on my Predator. I'm not even sure I said thank you to my Dad. It was all a blur, and a moment of extreme excitement. My bike felt like it was 20 times faster than my old bike.

My new bike became my life. I couldn't ride it enough, couldn't clean it enough, and couldn't buy enough new things for my bike. Every time I got paid for my paper route, I was at the bike shop buying anything I could afford. Even something as small as a few stickers fired me up.

My best friend and I rode our bikes day and night on the weekends. Summer time was a never ending bike ride. There were BMX tracks behind two of the local schools, and we rode the tracks three times a day!

After a few months, my bike became one of the coolest bikes around. I had purchased new tires and had all the bells and whistles a kid could ever want on his bike. Every dime I had went into my bike.

But, one unfortunate day changed my life forever. There were instances of kids getting their bikes stolen from our area, specifically in the apartments located near my house.

One day, while in 4th grade, I was playing football with 8 or 9 friends at this apartment complex. My bike was in front of a friend's house, flipped upside down, which is how we always parked our bikes.

While playing football, two bigger kids rode by on a bike, one pedaling and the other sitting on the back seat. I had a bad feeling from the time I saw them. I felt it in my gut, and my instincts were right.

Naive to the ways of the world, I didn't think anyone could have it in their heart to steal someone else's bike, someone's pride and joy. I was wrong. As we played football, one of the teenagers walked up and grabbed my bike as if it was his own.

He hopped on my bike and aggressively pedaled straight down the middle of our field as if he was gonna run all of us over. He shouted at us to get out of his way as he zipped by each and everyone of us. We ALL froze. It was as if the world had stopped moving while this bully stole my bike. Here we were, a bunch of eight and nine-year-olds staring as one kid controlled our world. My bike was my world.

None of us tried to stop him. We just froze. Helpless, scared, and shocked, I ran home immediately to tell my parents. They drove me in their car immediately after the news with hopes that we would spot the kid riding my bike on the streets.

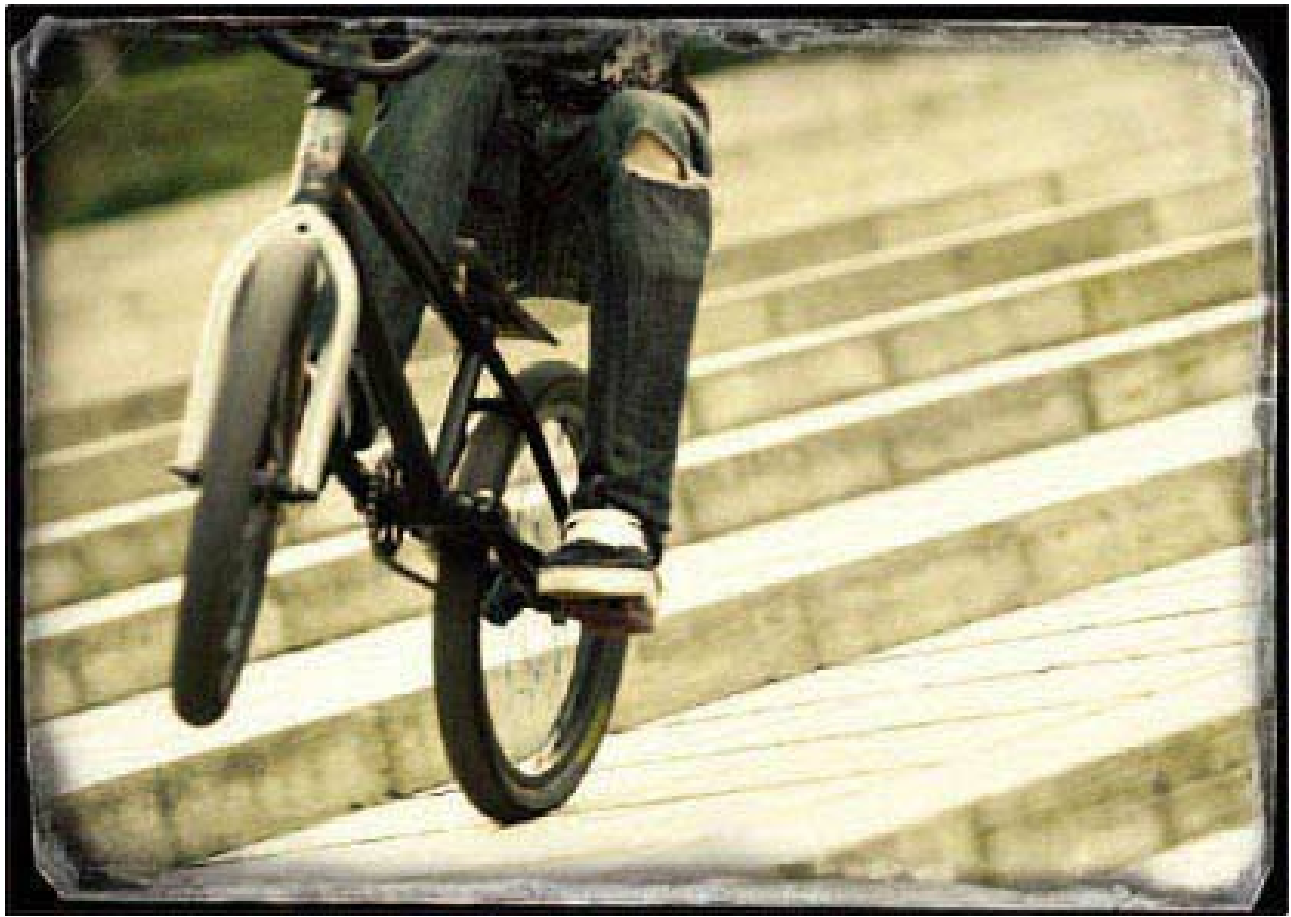
We drove around for what seemed like hours, and never saw my bike again. That night the dinner table was extremely quiet. I had never felt such emotional pain, and never knew your stomach could feel the way it did when you lost something you were so passionate for.

Looking back, this was a critical lesson in my life that showed me how being stronger and bigger than someone else gives you the advantage. I was half the size of the kid who stole my bike, leaving me scared to try and stop him. Strength is not just about being bigger, though. It's also about the confidence to step up and fight for what you want, fight for what you believe in, fight for what you are passionate about.

Every weekend my Dad and I would drive around the streets of Fords and Perth Amboy, the neighboring towns of Edison, hoping to see my bike. We never had any luck. My Predator would never see the light of day in my hands ever again. I was devastated.

I worked my paper route by foot after my bike was stolen. It truly sucked. I started saving my money all over again with my sights set another new bike. This bike was not as amazing as my Predator and it was not as expensive either. I just HAD to get back on a bike again.

While my friends rode around on their bikes, I was on my feet for a solid three or four months until I finally saved enough money for my new bike, a Diamond Back. When I hopped on my Diamond Back for the first time I was excited, but it wasn't the same excitement I felt for my Predator.



Still, I fell in love with my new bike and guarded it like a hawk. The bike never left my sight, and if I was going to play in the apartments my bike stayed home and I traveled by foot.

I felt normal again. Having no bike was like being locked in a closet for months on end. It was painful every day, and the weekends were more painful as my friends rode their bikes and I was empty handed.

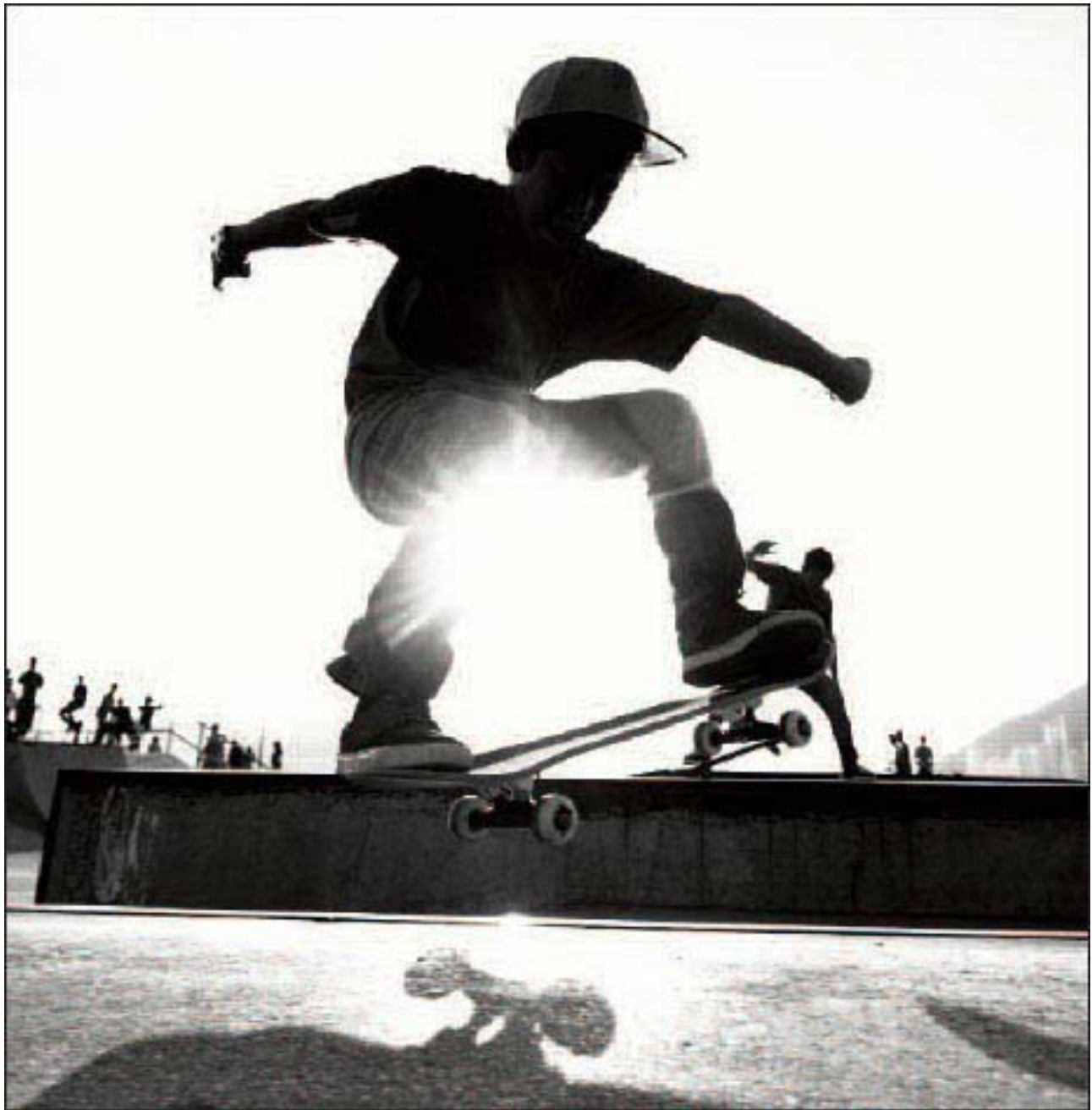
Being on my bike gave me a sense of freedom that got my heart and blood pumping unlike anything I could describe. Most kids on their bikes fell into one of two categories. They were either BMX riders who raced on dirt tracks, or they were freestyle riders who preferred doing tricks, riding the streets, and riding ramps.

I didn't discriminate against either style of riding. I loved it all. I rode the streets, the ramps, and the BMX tracks. I did whatever I felt like doing, listening to what my soul guided me to do on the bike.

Although I was young, I was pretty intuitive with my riding. Not only did I know how to ride my bike in any environment, I also learned how to fix my bike.



I loved my bike, but I loved our doberman Oz even more. I grew up with him from age 7 until age 20. When we had to put him down it crushed me and I was depressed for a solid week



When I was 10 years old, my friend and I would take apart our entire bikes and put them back together if we were bored. Flat tires, brake pads, changing the cranks, the break cables... you name it, I could do it. I envisioned myself owning my own bike shop when I got older.

I loved being around bikes and there were times that I would bring my bike from the garage and into my room when my parents didn't know, just so I could be close to my bike. Some would call that crazy, but not me. I call that passion.

I woke up, ate cereal, and cleaned my bike in my room. On weekends I made sure I was the first kid riding my bike on the streets. I rode my bike to school instead of taking the school bus, regardless of the weather. Rain or snow, I still rode my bike to elementary and middle school.

When I got into middle school, I learned about the two schools — biking and

skateboarding. Supposedly, you had to be in one or the other. I always did both. Although I gravitated more towards my bike, I loved riding my skateboard and I loved seeing what skateboarders could do. It fired me up.

The older kids I met riding on the BMX tracks didn't think like I did. I saw things differently. My respect really climbed when I was leaving school one day and a crew of kids drove up, parked their car, hopped out of the car, and immediately began kicking away on their skateboards.

I didn't recognize any of them except for one, who was known not just around Edison, but around the world. His name was Mike Vallely, and he is a professional skateboarder. Back then, Mike was a teenager and he was tearing up the streets of Edison on his skateboard. I saw Mike and his buddies climb a ladder on the side of a warehouse and then begin skating the roof top! The roof was shaped like a half pipe, and Mike was in the air every couple of seconds.

I respected anyone I saw in the air on their bike or skateboard. It was inspiring to me to see how one could take their passion to such a high level of skill.

On another occasion, I remember lining up in the middle of a street behind a bunch of my friends, waiting my turn to jump a ramp a bunch of us had built for BMX bikes. In the distance behind me, I saw Mike V, riding his skateboard on his own, cruising down the street. I saw him approaching and assumed he would just skate on by all of us and head to wherever his friends lived.

Instead, he hauled ass in front of all of us and jumped the ramp with his board. This ramp was a solid 3 or 4 feet tall, and Mike went airborne — higher than the height of a car. Myself and my buddies stood there, frozen in shock as Mike flew through the air. That memory never left my mind.

Here was this guy, intensely passionate about what he did, yet also a Renegade of sorts. He skated anywhere and everywhere. He didn't discriminate with skating, and I didn't discriminate with biking. All that mattered to me was having fun, and Mike lived for skateboarding the same way.

To this day, some 20 + years later, Mike lives the same way. He isn't stuck in commercialism and doesn't sell out to companies for money. He does what he does for the love and passion of skateboarding. I've always felt the same about training as I evolved from a young teenager lifting to this day. I train the way I train because of my passion, not because of fads or gimmicks.

A company could never pay me to pretend to be something or someone I'm not. I call this being a Soul Lifter. I don't care WHAT I lift, I just LOVE to lift and train. I follow what my gut instincts tell me.

This book will share my insights, my mistakes, and my journey in the world of training. I'll share the good and the bad. My goal is for you to avoid my painful mistakes and hopefully find the same passion I do for training and being strong. Whether you're an athlete, a parent, or a coach doesn't matter. These lessons and stories can be applied to your life for the better. By no means is this the end-all, be-all of The Underground Strength method. My system of training is always evolving, as will yours, depending on where you are in life, day by day, year by year.

Whatever it is you do, just make sure you follow your passion and listen to your gut instincts. Doing so will give you the commitment and energy required to achieve success and get results.

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MODERN BODYBUILDING

*The Ultimate Book on Bodybuilding
Now in Paperback!*

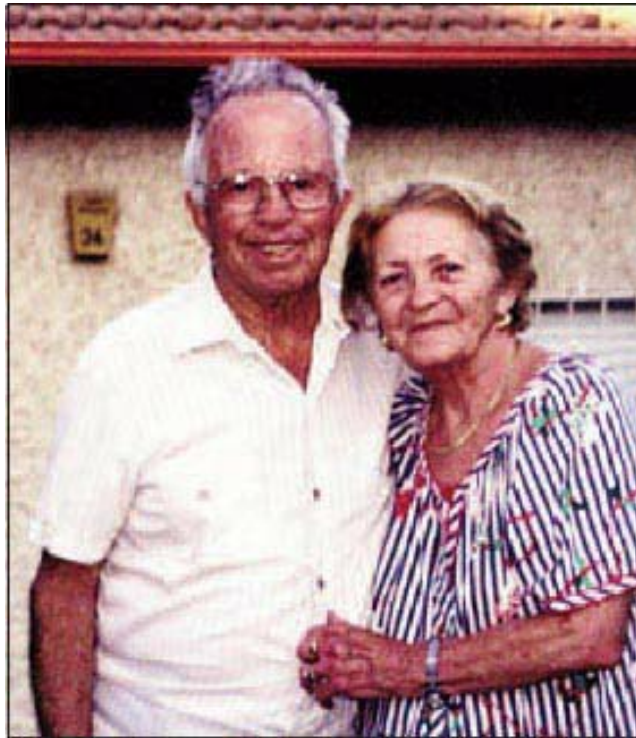


with Bill Dobbins With more than 850 photographs and anatomical line drawings • Arnold's championship body part exercises • Complete information on exercise programs, training principles, competition strategy, diet and nutrition • And a Bodybuilding Hall of Fame—in full color

HOW IT ALL STARTED

It was June 1989. There was two weeks left of 8th grade. I was 13 1/2 years old when I made the trek downstairs to my big brother's room. He had some basic weights down there: A Joe Weider bench, a bunch of sand filled weights, and a few steel plates. This was the traditional 1980s home gym set up.

I had read Arnold's Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding several times before I ever made my initial trek into my older brother's room to start training. My Grandfather bought Arnold's book for us when we were in Israel one Summer, after my brother and I sat on the local book store's floor for hours on end, reading Arnold's book until the store was closing. My brother had to have Arnold's book, and my Grandfather bought us everything we wanted. He loved us so much, I don't think he knew how to say no to us.



My grandparents in Israel.

When my Grandfather bought Arnold's book, it was double the American price. I remember how shocked my parents were to find out that the book was about \$50. In the '80s, \$50 was a lot of money, especially for a book.

I had tried working out on my own before, always without success and without consistency. I made a few half-hearted attempts at dumbbell curls and benching, but nothing more. I tried working out when I was in 6th and 7th grade, but I never had the mindset required to commit to a training program. So naturally, I never stuck with it. I would last a week, maybe two weeks, and then get bored and stop lifting weights.

Looking back, who would have guessed that I ever would have gotten bored from training?! I remember how I was worried that something was actually wrong with me after always stopping this thing called "bodybuilding."

I saw my older brother always working out in some shape or form - lifting weights, running the dog three times a day, doing push ups and sit ups, challenging himself with weird things like doing 10 situps or pushups every time he opened the fridge. His room was always filled with some strange powder from the local health food store. My Mom freaked out on him and made him throw all his supplements away because she thought they were steroids. My parents thought my brother's fascination with vitamins and exercise was crazy, but looking back, I find that kind of behavior completely normal today.

At the age of 11 or 12 years old, my lack of commitment really had me worried that maybe, just maybe, I would never be strong like my older brother. I feared I would always be that weak kid with a pudgy stomach and skinny arms.

Some of the weights housed in my brother's room were there thanks to me. I had helped him pick up some weights from the local sporting goods store one summer. I recall him convincing me during the summer time that we had to ride our bikes to the mall and buy weights at Herman's Sporting Goods store.

I was scared and thought it was a crazy idea, recommending to him that we should wait for our parents to drive us to the mall, as it was located across a major highway. We had heard horror stories about what happened to kids crossing that highway with their bikes.

Waiting for our parents? My brother would have none of this waiting around, and insisted we go today, right NOW! He was impulsive, to say the least, but I followed him anyway.

As we rode our bikes, I clearly heard the voice of our parents telling us that we should never cross the highway on our bikes, but my parents' wishes and threats didn't seem to register with my older brother, who was kind of a wild kid if you catch my drift.

Since he was literally addicted to working out, he decided that we had to get those weights regardless of the consequences. So, as any younger brother would do, I listened to him and followed him on my bike to Herman's Sporting Goods store, across Route 1, just like Mom and Dad said to never do.

I was nervous as all hell when we crossed that highway, because I'd heard countless horror stories of kids on bikes and accidents. I recall sitting on our bikes waiting at the traffic light intersection, hoping that none of the parents in the neighborhood would see us and tell on us. Luckily, we made it to Herman's safely, and I remember locking up our bikes as if our lives depended on it.

After my bike was stolen, I became the master of locking up my bike. I would loop the lock through both tires and the bike frame. There was no possibility anyone would be able to walk away with my bike, ever again.

At the time, my brother and I were complete opposites. I was addicted to riding my bike. Lifting weights and this working out stuff? Not so much.

We walked into the store wearing our empty back packs, and with my brother's money, we bought four ten-pound plates. He put 20 pounds into his backpack, as did I. We rode our bikes home, and on the way home, there was a slow, steady hill that made it tougher and tougher to ride my bike up.

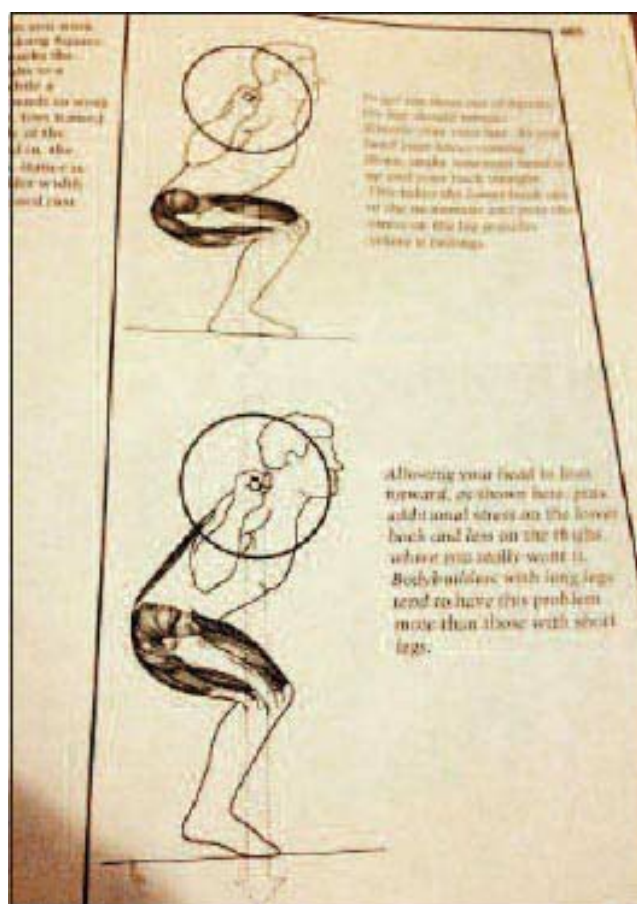
My brother gained more and more distance away from me, and I remember him looking back, shouting at me to hurry up and to keep up with him. I was too weak to keep up, and I wound up having to walk my bike up the rest of the hill. That was good ol' Grandview Ave. I'll never forget that moment of being too weak to even ride my bike up a hill. That was another one of those early life lessons teaching me how "Strength Wins."

Finally, when the road flattened out, I wobbled my weak legs back on to my bike and rode all the way home, trailing far behind my brother. When I finally arrived home and took my backpack off, put it down, and walked up our long flight of stairs, I felt like I was 100 pounds lighter.

Just like I remember that trip carrying weights in my school back pack and learning my first lesson in what happens when someone is stronger than you, I also remember my first "real" workout.

Training in my brother's room, I decided to start following the beginner programs in Arnold's book. I opened up the book and flipped to a picture of Arnold demonstrating how to perform back squats.

I saw the photo showing that you weren't supposed to be up on your toes while squatting and that your feet should be flat. I flipped through the book a little bit more and found the beginner leg work out.



How to perform proper squats from Arnold's *Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding*.

It said to do squats for sets of 10 repetitions. Little by little, I added weight to the skinny chrome barbell with spin lock collars and kept squatting, set after set. The first few sets weren't too bad. I was getting in a groove, squatting just like the picture showed. Flat back, heels flat. It was all going perfectly until that ONE set. I clearly recall that ONE brutal set — it was a whopping 65 pounds.

Somehow, someway, I cleaned that monster of a weight off the floor, pressed it over my head, and placed it on my back. There was no squat rack in my brother's room — except, of course, for the option of turning my Joe Weider Bench into a squat stand, but that looked like it was a death sentence waiting to happen. The only alternative was the good ol' clean & press.

I had to earn my squats by getting the barbell over my head first. THEN I could squat the weight. I quickly realized that if I want to squat heavier, I was going to need stronger shoulders.

I did my squats with my 65 lbs just as prescribed by Arnold's book, but when I tried to press the 65-lb barbell over my head so I could return it to the floor, it didn't budge. I tried again—no luck. Once again, I was learning my lessons in strength through weakness. Being strong gives you the advantage.

I paused for a few seconds to assess my situation, wondering how the heck I would get this weight off my back. I scanned the room left and right. My brother's bed caught my eye and it looked like the perfect place to "unrack" my barbell. I walked backwards and sat down on my brother's bed with the weight on my back. NO, this was not an early version of box squatting, this is what happens when a 65-lb clean and press is your 1 rep max in the military press.

When I found my way to the bed and sat down, I slowly leaned back and dumped the bar onto the bed. After catching my breath and regaining my wits, I rolled the bar off of the bed and lightened it up after realizing 65 pounds would bury me.

I became addicted to working out after that day. Even though that 65-lb barbell kicked my ass, something finally clicked with me, and I became intrigued and inspired by the bodybuilders I saw in magazines. I wanted to be exactly like them. I wanted tree trunk legs, ripped abs, a big chest, and mountain-peaked biceps.

Little did I know that these magazine images were loaded full of pumped up bodybuilders, most of them on drugs. I was naive, 13 years young, and I wanted to look like the guys in Flex Magazine.

This was June of 1989. There were two weeks left in the 8th grade and I didn't tell anybody at school or around the neighborhood that I was working out. I kept it a secret because I knew everyone would laugh and make fun of me as if it was a joke and something stupid to do. I was about 120 lbs at the time.

I began to run every day around the block with my dog. My brother had influenced me, as he would run three and sometimes four times a day with our dog — a huge Doberman who forced my brother to sprint the entire time.

That one-mile run with our dog was NO joke, because I HAD to keep up with my dog or I would end up flat on my face. Day after day, I kept running with my dog and sometimes with my older brother. It was no easy feat, but I got it done at least once a day and it became habit. In fact, it was becoming part of my lifestyle. I just didn't know that the word "lifestyle" existed back then.

I began riding my bike to all the local convenience stores to sit and read all the bodybuilding magazines - Flex, Muscular Development, and Muscle and Fitness. I used my paper route money to buy one or two magazines a month, and I read the others in the store, cover to cover, oftentimes hanging around the magazine rack for over an hour.

Eventually, after several weeks of going to the same convenience store to keep re-reading the bodybuilding magazines, one store manager hung a sign up on the magazine rack. The sign read: "This is not a library. If you're going to read these magazines, you will have to buy them." I was in shock and disappointment when I saw that sign. I knew it was

directed toward me.

I knew there had to be a way for me to stop sitting on the floor of these stores. I had to start subscribing to these magazines, so I tore out the subscription forms and rode my bike home so I could show my parents that I was now interested in reading.



My parents were always worried by my lack of interest in reading, and this would be the perfect opportunity to show them I would start reading on a regular basis. I asked my Dad if he could write a check for my magazine subscription, unsure if he would even approve of his son wanting to read magazines with half-naked men on every other page.

My parents saw that the only things I would read were bodybuilding books and magazines, so I gave my Dad the cash I saved up from mowing lawns, and he sent out a check for my magazine subscription. I was fired up!

Every month I knew that Flex would arrive during the first week of the month, so when those days got closer I began hounding the mail man, hoping that the next issue was in his hands. He must have thought I was a freak.

Every day I checked my progress in the mirror, posing and flexing like Arnold said you

should, seeing if I was getting more muscle in my legs, my pecs, shoulders, arms, and abs.

I'll never forget that one day, three weeks after I started training. A girl from my school was hanging out with my friend and me. I had a shirt with my sleeves cut off, and she mentioned how big my biceps were. I went home that night and started cutting the sleeves off almost all of my summer shirts.

Every day, I would train immediately after school, six days a week. Once the summer came around, I would train in the morning immediately after breakfast. The rest of the day my mind was focused on bodybuilding.

Every night, I would lie in bed and read a magazine or a bodybuilding book that my brother had purchased for himself. I began getting into training more than my older brother was! I clipped a reading light to my bed so I could read every night before going to sleep.

I would often read the same book or magazine three times in one day. This would continue for days and weeks in a row until I got the next new magazine or book. I simply could NOT get enough information in my hands fast enough. There weren't enough books or magazines on the newsstands or in book stores for me. As soon as my new magazine arrived in the mail box, I would tear open the magazine. I had to see what the top bodybuilders were doing with their workouts. I copied every single workout and training routine written in the magazines.

Back then I had no idea that these magazine workouts were fabricated and made up by the writers and not so much the bodybuilders themselves. I was naive and thought that if I trained the same as these magazines recommended, squeezing the muscles, feeling the burn, and isolating the muscle groups that I too would look just like them.

PUSH UPS, ARM WRESTLING & TRAINING PARTNERS

I finally started to gain some respect in the neighborhood among the bigger, stronger kids, and I was feeling really good about myself. I had confidence that I never had before. Having muscles was important to me because I was still scarred from the fact that I was too weak to stop kids from stealing my bike five years earlier.

Having muscles and being stronger than other kids was important. It was how you earned respect. Being weaker and slower meant getting picked on and bullied, be it in the neighborhood or at school.

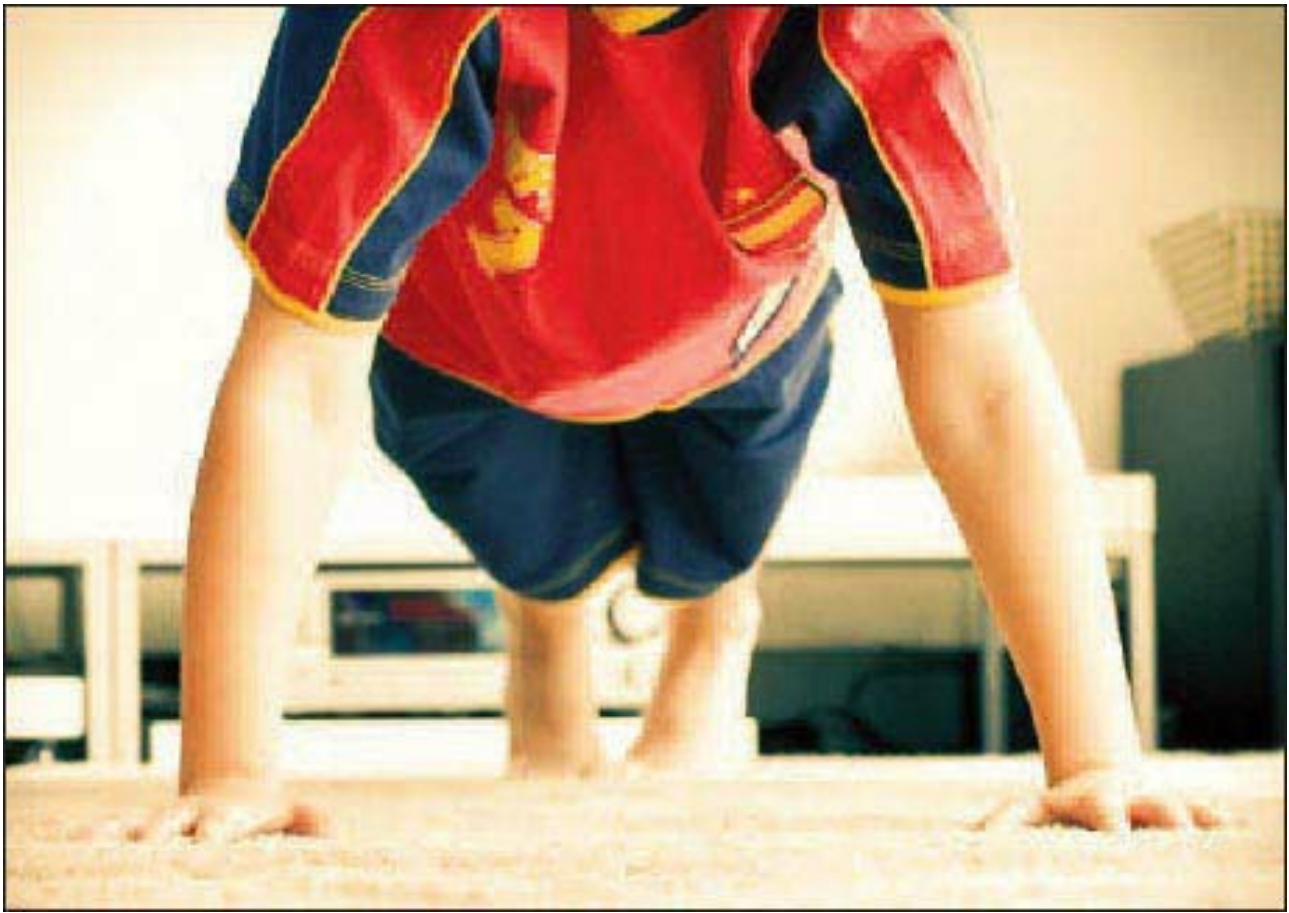
The summer before 8th grade, I remember the night all the kids in the neighborhood were arm wrestling one another on top of the hood of someone's car. I lost every arm wrestling match I was challenged to that night. Every single time. It was embarrassing to say the least.



I remember going home late that summer night, embarrassed that every kid on the block beat me in arm wrestling. As I walked home that night I said to myself, "I'm going to do pushups every day." As soon as I got home that night I walked upstairs to my room and did pushups. I was able to do 2 measly push ups. That is NOT a misprint. 2 reps, as in $1 + 1 = 2$.

It was pathetic that in middle school I was only able to perform 2 push ups.. I said to myself, "I'm going to do pushups in the morning, afternoon, AND evening." Back in the day, I had no clue I was actually using the GTG (Grease the Groove) method. But I was fired up from losing and this seemed like the perfect way to get good at pushups. Pushups were the exercise every kid viewed as THE exercise proving your strength — or lack thereof. In Phys Ed class, pushups created a clear line between the strong and the weak. And I was weak. I remember a kid making fun of my crappy push ups, laughing at me because he was stronger than me.

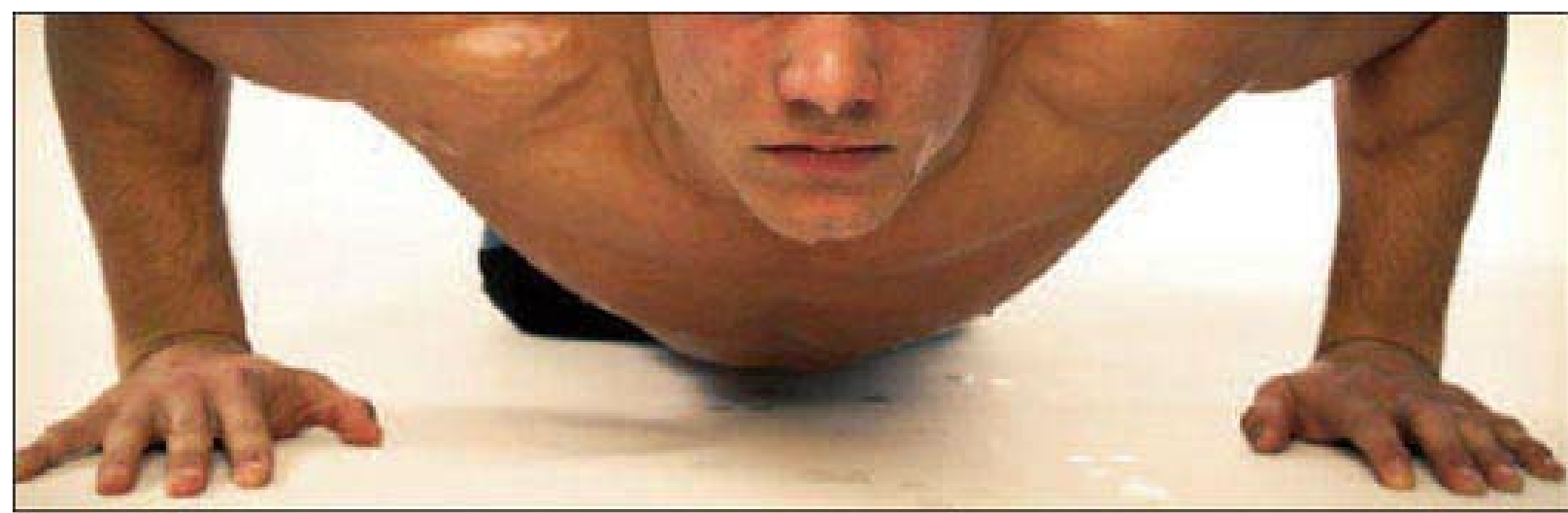
Every single day, I would add at least one pushup to my best set. Two pushups per set became three. Three became four. Four reps became seven reps. I remember when I was finally able to do 20 pushups in a row, I felt like I was the strongest kid in the world. It was as if I had "arrived." Back then, I believed that 20 pushups was the magic number. I told myself when I started working on my push ups, "As soon as I can do over 20 pushups, I'm gonna start to win arm wrestling matches and earn my respect."



Unfortunately, I didn't stick with those pushups once the summer ended and our nightly arm wrestling challenges came to an end. Looking back, I obviously wish I stuck to those pushups, the same way Herschel Walker did. You can't go wrong with bodyweight training. To this day, bodyweight training is a big part of my own workouts as well as the workouts I prescribe for others.

I tell my athletes, as well as every group of athletes I speak with: Do push ups for breakfast. I always emphasize the importance of pushups and calisthenics in general. Herschel Walker has influenced me tremendously in that department, that's for sure. Herschel was known for doing pushups, pullups, dips and sit ups during TV commercials. He would run sprints and chase his horse around on his farm when he was a kid.

I'm still not sure why I was finally committed and addicted to working out, but things were different this time around, that's for sure. I truly was addicted to the training and how it made me feel and look. It was ALL I could think about and ALL I wanted to do.



While other kids on the block were reading Hustler and Playboy Magazine, I was falling asleep every night with bodybuilding magazines in my hands and the nightlight left on. I would go to the bookstore every time my parents went to the mall. They would shop and eat at the mall, taking several hours, while I sat on the floor reading every bodybuilding book and magazine the book store had. I would always buy a new book or magazine every time I left the book store. That's where I spent the majority of my money.

Early that summer of '89, a friend in my neighborhood became my training partner. He was a year older than me, training for football. He was big time undersized compared to the majority of the football players in our high school, which at the time was a championship team — more on them later on.

I was acting like the coach during our workouts, organizing everything, writing down all our workouts on paper, and instructing on techniques, all of which I copied straight out of the books and the magazines from pro bodybuilders.



Every single workout had supersets and high repetitions. Sets of 10 - 20 reps were commonplace. The advice in the magazines was always about pumping the muscle, feeling the burn, squeezing out each rep, peak contraction, etc. Articles on developing brute strength and training to dominate your competition were not found in these magazines. This training developed what I call the "All show and NO go" body. Beach muscles and nothing more.

Looking back at those light pump up workouts, it was hilarious that I dared train in such a manner, even though they were quite challenging. Those high reps burned, I won't deny that. But high reps and light weights won't build the type of strength that overpowers others and gives you the confidence to go against the best. That Summer, I quickly learned the value of a good training partner and having a competitive environment.



My training partner and I were always trying to go heavier than one another or bang out more reps in the barbell curl than one another. We thought we were cool, and hey, we were! No one else was doing this kind of stuff in the neighborhood except us. It was as if we were truly doing something special. As we trained, our friends would be out and about playing basketball, riding their bikes, or just watching us. None of them saw or understood the value in building up their muscles. They thought it was weird, so instead of training with us, they watched us.

My training partner and I both trained with weightlifting gloves and a weightlifting belt, yet the heaviest weight we had available was only about ninety pounds. We wore our belts even when we curled 20-lb dumbbells. I would track every workout we did on a note pad. Arnold said to use a training journal, so I did it. No questions asked.

I became the neighborhood lifting coach, inspiring other kids to do pushups and eventually lift weights in their own houses or with my friend and me. I was helping all my friends with their workouts. They all came to me for advice on how to lift, even the older kids. I trained hard 6 days a week with my buddy, no slowing down, striving to get stronger and bigger every workout. The mirror would tell me if I made progress or not, as did the comments I got from my friends when I busted out the sleeveless shirts, 80s style!

Although we didn't really know what we were doing, we were working hard and being consistent. Hard work and consistency on a crappy program will always trump the perfect training program that lacks passion, intensity, and consistency. Don't ever forget that.

ANDRE THE GIANT

When August came around that summer before high school, my family and I traveled to Israel to visit my grandparents. I was extremely worried that I wouldn't be able to train while in Israel, fearing I would lose all the muscle gains I worked so hard for. The only things I knew how to do at the time without use of a gym were pushups, pullups, calf raises, crunches, and running.

When we got to Israel, I immediately started bugging my Grandparents and parents about my need to find a gym. I complained about how my muscles would shrink and become weak if I couldn't find a place to lift weights. I was annoying them, to put it lightly.

Other family members in Israel were telling me not to lift weights. They told me that when I stop lifting weights my muscles will turn to flab along with other crazy words of wisdom they gave me. I ignored them and remembered reading how Arnold said similar things in his book, *The Education of a Bodybuilder*. Everyone was against him minus a select few adults who became his mentors. I refused to listen to the naysayers.

In the small town my Grandparents lived in, everyone knew everyone. My Grandfather told us that he heard of a gym operated by a "strong man" named Andre who lived in town. Others referred to him as "Andre The Giant."

My brother and I bothered my Grandfather every single day until he found out where Andre lived. Andre had an actual gym in his house. The gym was located downstairs in what they call a flat. This was essentially a downstairs living area with several bed rooms. But instead of living quarters such as beds, couches, and such, a gym was there. This was not your ordinary gym, and I'll explain that in just a minute.

Finally, after days of hounding my Grandfather, he answered my prayers. During the afternoon one day, when all the Israelis would take their daytime naps and all stores would close, we bothered our Grandfather so much that we forced him to take us to Andre's house. My Dad drove us, as my Grandfather never owned a car; he always rode his bike, walked, or took the bus everywhere he went.

Andre lived on the other side of town, only a few minutes away by car. I remember standing with my brother alongside my Grandfather as he knocked on the door, as the entire town slept. There were no cars on the road, and stores even closed during this afternoon time.

Andre was pretty pissed off when he answered the door, as we woke him up from his daily nap. I was nervous just standing there. My Grandfather told Andre we were here

from America and we were looking for a place to train. Andre told us we could come to the gym later that night and how much it would cost us to train there while on vacation.

Our grandfather paid for our membership to Andre's gym & we went back that very same night. I couldn't wait to train, and was ready to explode as all I had been doing for three or four days was reading about training in the magazines and the books I brought with me.

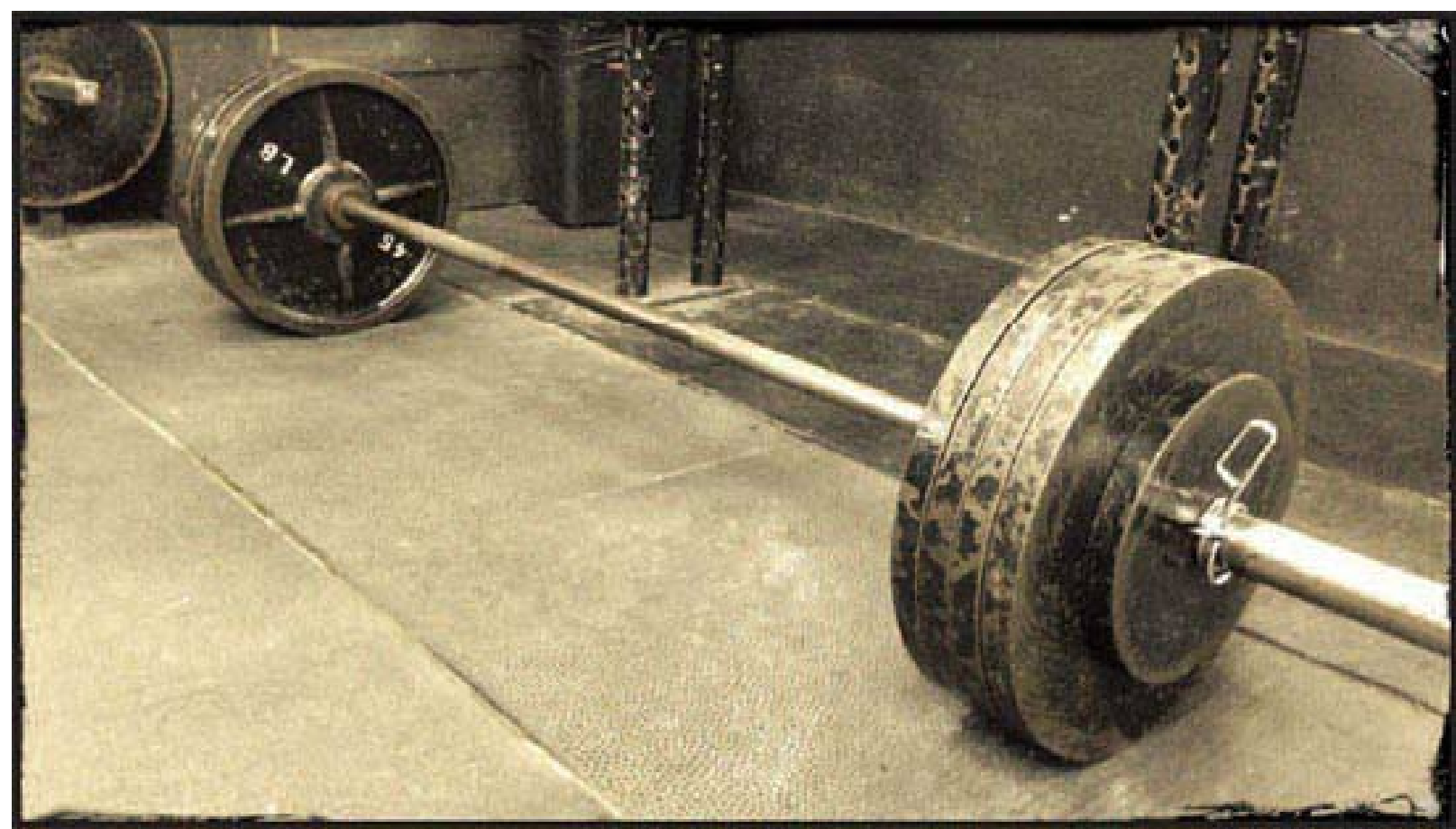
My first night at Andre's Gym is one of my most memorable moments in training – and in life itself. It was the first time I'd witnessed someone perform the Olympic lifts. Ever. I didn't even know there was such a thing as Olympic Lifting. I thought there was bodybuilding and that was all, nothing else. I was living in a bubble of beach muscles and baggy pants, immersed in the bodybuilding cult.

Andre's gym was small, as it was built for living, sleeping, eating, etc. It was not supposed to be a place to train or a place to build a gym. There were several rooms with various pieces of equipment in the form of machines, dumbbells, and some fixed barbells. It was all the typical gym equipment, such as lat pulldown machines, leg extension, and leg curl machines.

The bedrooms was where all the "normal equipment" was found. Then there was Andre's section of the gym. It was a corner housed all by itself, separate from all the "normal" equipment where all the "normal" people trained.

Andre had the ceiling cut out higher than other areas of the gym, as well as 2 sections of the floor cut out so he could drop his weights while performing the Olympic lifts. In the section on the floor that was cut out were pieces of rubber that were cut and shoved in there to allow the weights to drop without damage, as if it was a small weight pit of sorts. I had never seen or heard of anything like it.

Andre didn't say anything to anyone. He was doing his own thing while everyone else stayed away from him, working on the machines. It was as if they knew not to mess with the guy.



I remember seeing him doing his lifts. I tried to play it off, not paying much attention or staring and focused on my own thing. I recall the work he was doing, it is still unlike anything I've ever seen, even to this day. I remember the movements like a movie playing in my head, and I can still see the movie screen.

Andre was performing high-speed, split jerks. To this day I've never seen anyone perform split jerks so fast, so violently, explosively, and aggressively! Boy do I wish I knew then what I know now. I would have lived in that gym day and night to learn from Andre The Giant. Unfortunately, I was completely uneducated, or as some might say, "brainwashed" by the magazines.

After split jerks, Andre performed high pulls, cleans, and jump squats with the bar on his back. He would drop the bar after his heavy sets, and you could feel the floor rumble as the weights smashed into the rubber pit he cut out in the floor.

Andre was built as you would expect a European weightlifter to be built. He trained in a tank top, short shorts, and special weight lifting shoes. He wore a leather weightlifting belt. His ankles and knees were small, his calves were big and ripped, and his legs were stretching through his shorts with thick quads and sweeping hamstrings.

His traps pushed through his tank top, his shoulders were round like cannon balls, and his arms and forearms were thick and powerful looking. To say he intimidated everyone in that gym was an understatement. Just thinking of him makes me nervous.

I remember thinking to myself as I watched him in shock during all those Olympic Lifts, "What the hell is this moron doing? He looks like an idiot," is what ran through my mind. I remember acting cool, thinking that I knew what I was doing after memorizing every article and every word that was written in the bodybuilding magazines.

Here I was, 13 1/2 years old, not even in high school, thinking I was THE expert. But this was not the place or the time for me to be pretending I was an expert. I was soon about to learn.

In between one of Andre's sets, I'll never forget the moment my brother asked me, "Hey Zach, what workout are you doing today?"

I spoke confidently, and loudly enough that others could hear. I hoped to impress them with my expertise, telling my brother, "Today, I'm going to superset chest and back. I'm gonna do 4 sets of 10 in the barbell row supersetted with 4 sets of 10 dumbbell flys...."

After I finished rambling my crazy talk of training, I got back to "work." I was standing in the middle of the gym floor doing bent over rows, but unbeknownst to me, I was doing them incorrectly. My back was rounded over. Out of the blue, mid set, Andre yelled at me with his deep, lumber jack voice in his broken English, "That is wrong!"

His voice alone intimidated and scared the hell out of me. When he screamed, it was as if we were in a crowded night club and the music stopped playing. When Andre yelled at me, the entire gym froze and stopped what they were doing.

Andre screamed at me, telling me that I was going to hurt my back doing this exercise the wrong way. He walked over to my puny barbell and demonstrated how I looked when rowing, and then demonstrated the right way to perform a bent over row. He demonstrated a flat back and pulling the bar to the neck, not the stomach.

My back was rounded over like a banana, showcasing how weak and untrained I was.

The gym members and my brother were all in shock as Andre yelled at me. It was as if the world stood still when Andre demonstrated the bent over row. I was embarrassed and scared of Andre at the same time. I started to get teary eyed, and left his house and stood outside alone, across the street on someone else's front lawn.

My brother must have felt bad after a few minutes of my absence, so he tried convincing me to return to the gym. I stood on the other side of the street, embarrassed while trying to hold back my tears. Shortly after my brother's failed attempts to get me back to the gym, other members from the gym started coming outside, shouting to me from across the street to come back into the gym saying things like, "It's OK to work out now! Come back."

As I stood there crying, waving everyone off, and refusing to go back to the gym I heard

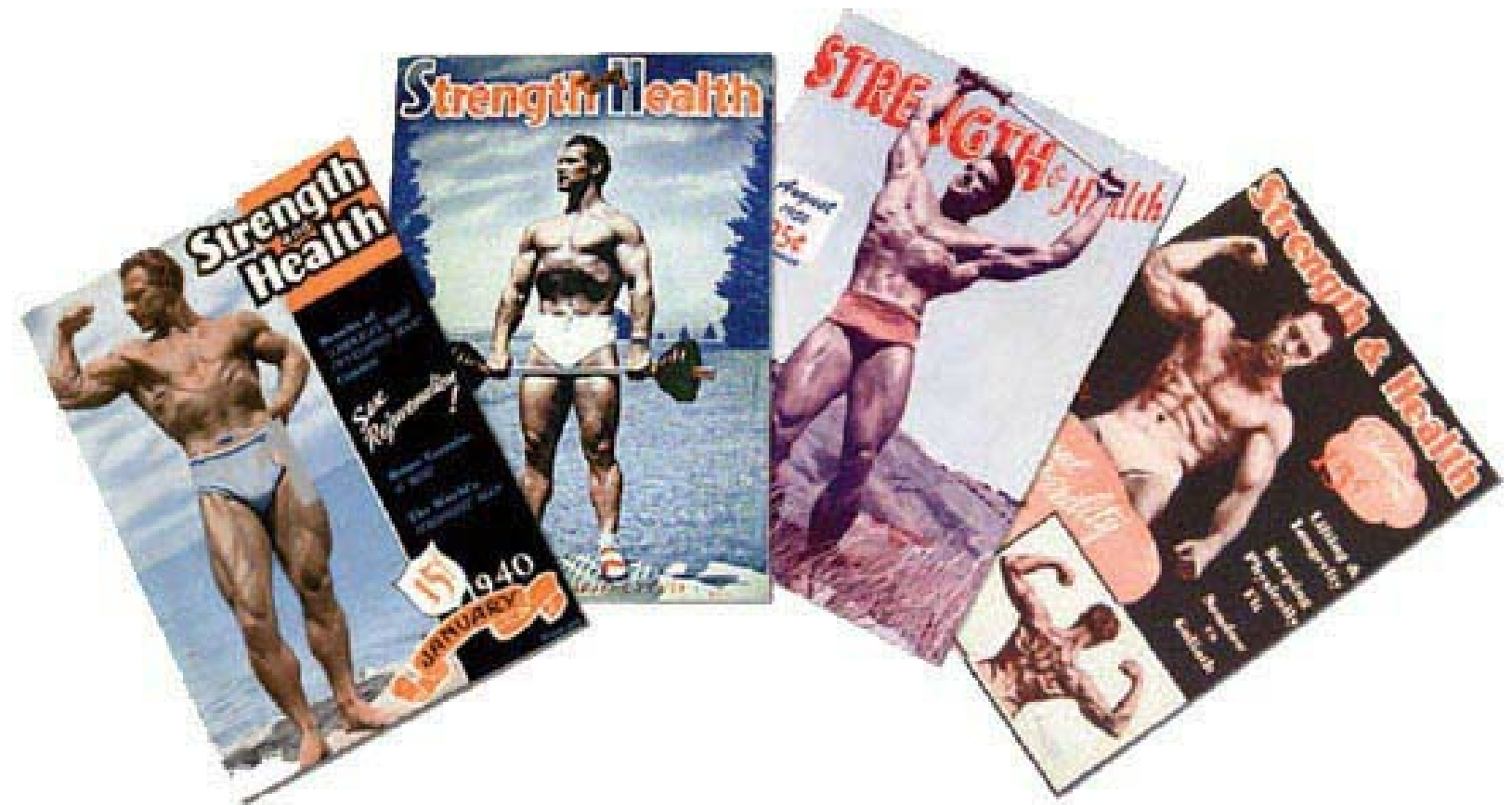
Andre's weights dropping to the floor, set after set. BOOM! BOOM! I would hear each time the weights dropped to the floor. Andre never walked outside once to see where the cry baby was.

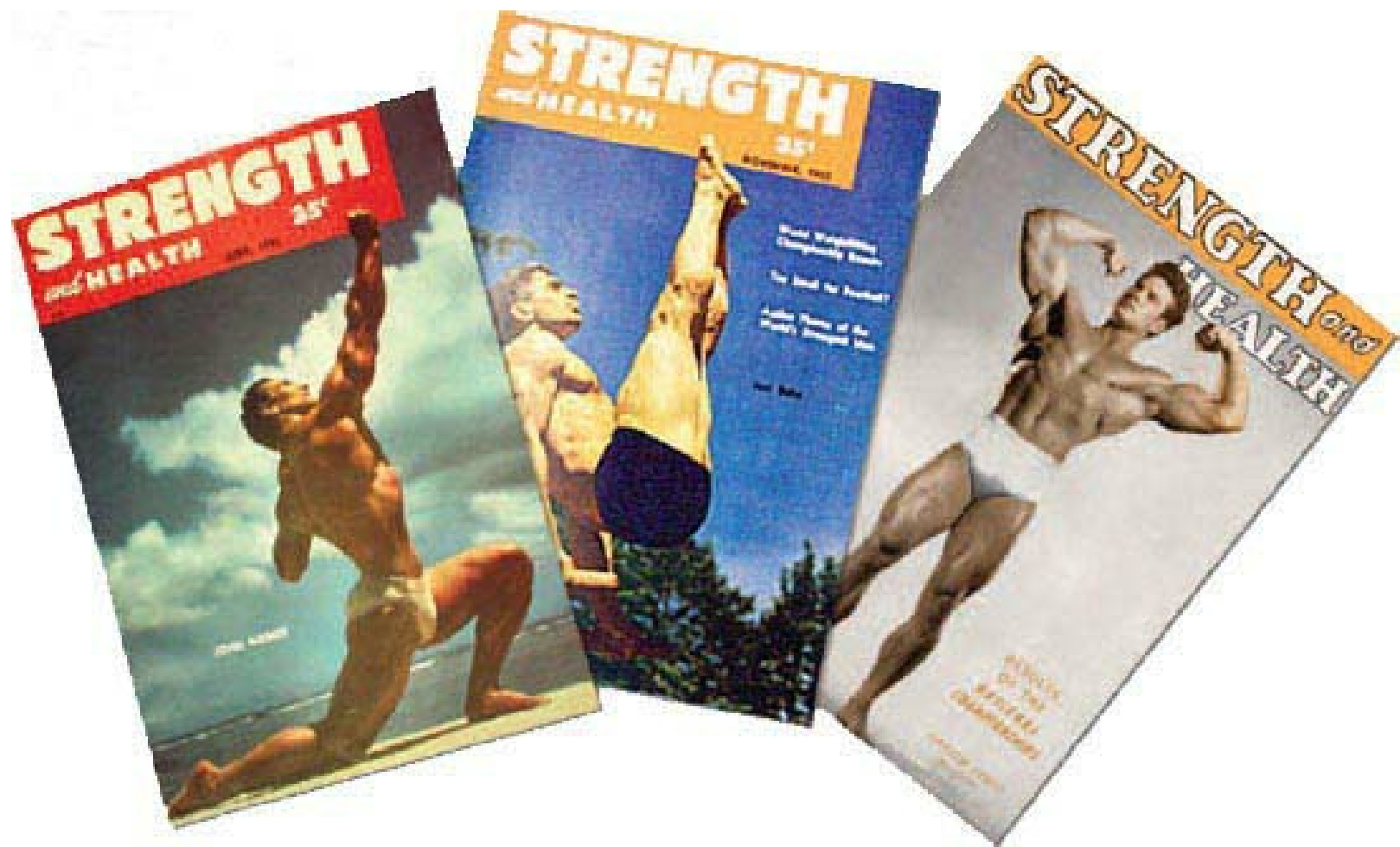
Eventually, everyone gave up on me and went back inside to continue their training. When my grandfather came to pick us up along with my Dad, Andre told them that I was crying because I did the exercise wrong and he was trying to help me. He told them I had no clue what I was doing, and that I needed to listen to him if I wanted to get stronger.

My grandfather was embarrassed by me, and shouted for me to get into the car. The entire ride home, my Grandfather lectured me, telling me that I should listen to Andre, insisting that Andre was THE expert, NOT me. I walked inside our home, embarrassed and disappointed.

I was so upset that my knowledge from all the books and magazines had let me down. I thought we were supposed to "feel the muscle," "squeeze the muscle," and not focus on the weight. I was supposed to focus on the peak contraction of the muscle. I wanted to do triceps pushdowns and lat pulldowns, leg extensions and leg curls, just like they told me to do in the magazines to shape my muscles.

I thought Andre was some crazy dumb ass who was dropping weights, jumping with heavy weights on his back and not squeezing his muscles. I thought that HE was the one who would get hurt, certainly not me. I had never seen, heard, or read about any of the training that Andre was doing.





Bodybuilders weren't encouraged in magazines to do Olympic or even powerlifts back in the 80s. You never saw anyone in the gym doing power cleans, jerks, or jump squats. You saw them using smith machines, cables and seated or lying down exercises.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the good fortune of reading old school magazines from the 50s, 60s and 70s, such as Strength & Health or Muscle Builder & Power. Those magazines encouraged heavy lifting, powerlifting, and Olympic lifting even if you were a bodybuilder. They encouraged eating meat and potatoes, drinking milk, and even doing gymnastics.

Weightlifting and powerlifting was a back room or garage gym training style that wasn't available inside any of the typical gyms. We were warned to never drop our weights. Seated exercises and machines were favored and instructed, and ground-based lifts were considered dangerous.

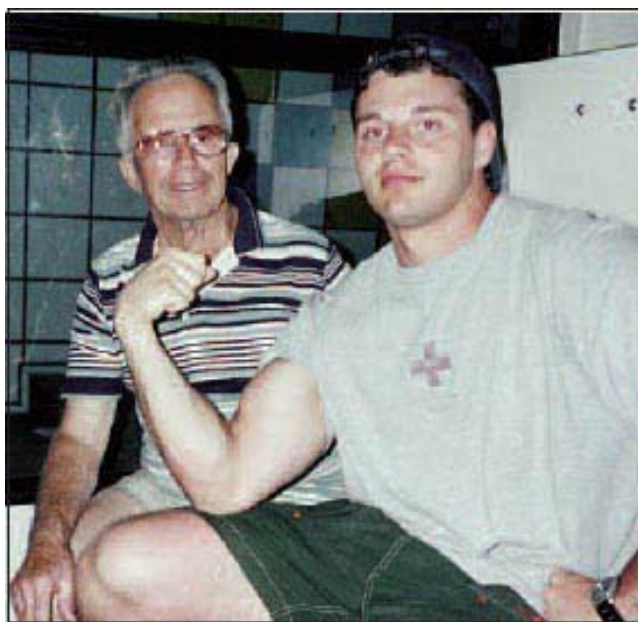
Powerlifters were 1 out of 100 in all the local gyms. Deadlifts? I never heard a bodybuilder telling me to get stronger and lift heavier when I was first starting out. Unfortunately for me, I came across the wrong influences and educational information early on, and I paid the price in many ways, as you're about to learn.

Some 10 years later, I was in Israel again at the local pool and I saw ALL of the machines that once inhabited Andre's gym, stashed off to the side of the pool, rusty and unused sitting under an open tent area. I was saddened by the sight. I wondered to myself why the weights were sitting there, rusty and unused. What had happened to Andre's gym,

and most of all, what had happened to Andre The Giant?

It was only a "short" half of a lifetime later, around the age of 25, that I realized I was the REAL idiot for not training the way Andre was training if I truly wanted to become strong and tough.

At the age of 25 or so, I began to learn about properly training for sports and how to develop special types of strength to improve sports performance. I learned that training to become a better athlete and a stronger man had nothing to do with all the "pump, squeeze, and feel the muscle" garbage I had read about for so long. Hey, better late than never.



With my grandfather in Israel.

Twenty years after my first encounter with Andre, I was presenting at The North Carolina State Strength Coaches Clinic, and I met a former Romanian Olympic lifting coach, Istvan Javorek. Coach Javorek and I began discussing how my father was also born in Romania, just like Istvan. My dad moved to Israel in his early years, giving our family a reason to travel there frequently.

Coach Javorek began telling me about a Romanian weightlifting champion, a legend, who had left Romania and moved to Israel in the time of communism. He described this man as a highly feared weightlifter who was pegged to become a world champion. The man was Andre, or as they referred to him in Romania, Andre The Giant.

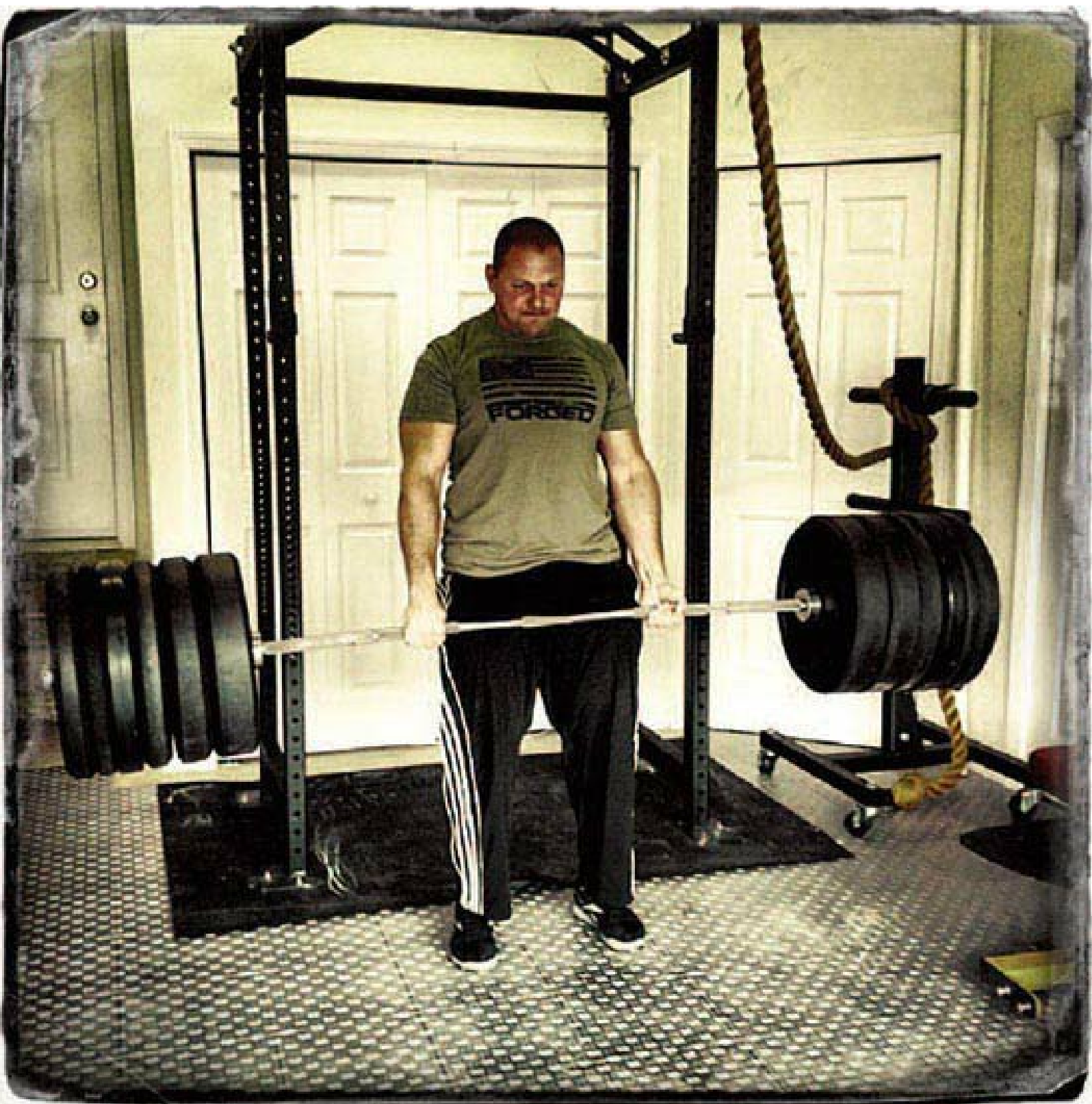
Coach Javorek had lost touch with Andre for 40 + years, and was beyond excited when I told him that I actually trained in Andre's home and what an animal Andre was. And of course, we laughed at how Andre made me cry.

I look back at those days in Israel, and I wish that I had a mentor like Andre to train me

like a real man, the right way, as he trained — throwing heavy weights over your head, ripping heavy weight from the ground, squatting heavy and deep, ass to the grass, performing jump squats with the bar on your back and the like.

In life, we often have small windows of opportunity, especially in sports, where our success will greatly depend on how physically and mentally prepared we are. My motivation behind this book is to train you for life, no matter what stage you are in and to help you succeed in life through the development of strength in mind and body.

When you read my stories and methods on “training athletes,” don’t ever count yourself out. When I say “athlete”, I am talking about YOU, regardless of your age, gender, job, etc. I consider everyone an athlete. It doesn’t matter if you compete in a sport or not.



THE "BEST" TRAINING PROGRAM

Is there a "best" training program, better than all the others?

Is there a perfect training program that has no flaws, no risks, and continuously allows you to progress week after week for the rest of your life?

The truth is that all workouts are flawed. You will hit plateaus and even get injured, especially as you get more advanced. You might end up training too hard, not resting enough, or trying to lift too heavy too soon, and these mistakes are what actually make you smarter with your own training. Pain is a powerful teacher. There is no such thing as the perfect program or the best training program in the world.

Of critical importance is that your training does not simply build bigger, stronger muscles and stop there. Bigger muscles are only on the surface. You want to build a body that can perform, a body that builds your confidence, a body that helps you achieve more success in life.

The right training program for you will change as your goals and life change. We all go through various stages in our lives depending on our age, our job, etc.

At all times, your training must also improve the strength of your mind and spirit, giving you the inner strength to conquer challenges and overcome obstacles that you face in and out the weight room, in sports, and in life.

You'll notice as I write that I am addressing your needs on various fronts. Perhaps you're an athletic coach. Perhaps you're an athlete for a particular sport or several sports. Perhaps you are training for your job requirements in law enforcement, security, or the military. And perhaps you are "training for life" like me. Whatever you're training for, train with passion and intensity. There is something in here for anyone who has fire in their eyes. Without passion and a deep inner drive you'll be average at best.

As you read and learn, apply the methods that resonate with you and test the methods you question to see what works best for you. Don't knock it till you try it. If you prove something wrong, move onward and upward. The results will reveal the truth to you. Stick with what works and tweak what does not work for you.

Somehow, someway, in my teens, I missed the articles that I needed to come across. I missed the writings from men who went against the grain and broke the mold when it came to training outside the box.

This book blends the wisdom of my teachers along with the lessons I have learned from my personal experiences in life and lifting, dating all the way back to 1989. Luckily, I have

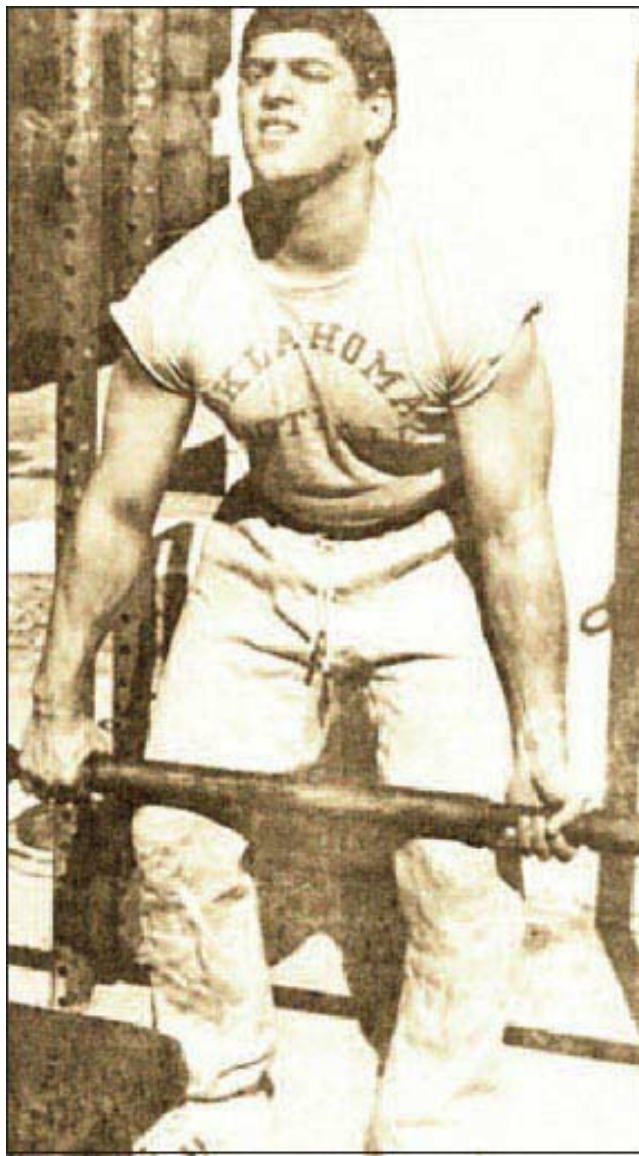
been able to get my hands on lots of "old school" material that others find no interest in.

I have piles and piles of old school books and magazines that somehow slipped through the cracks during my competitive times as an athlete, and unfortunately, these were the things I needed to have in my hands.

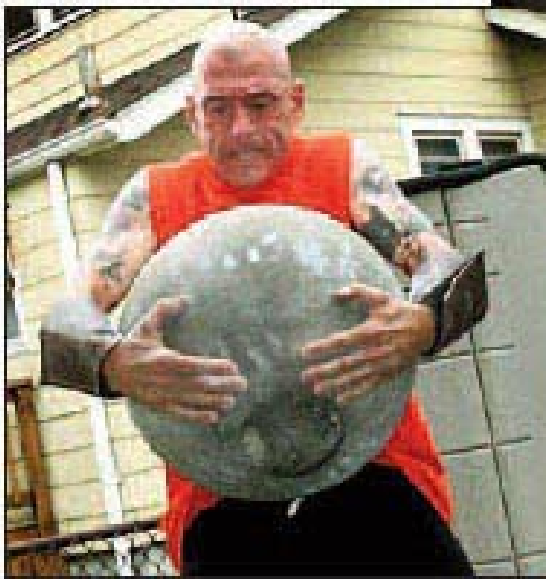
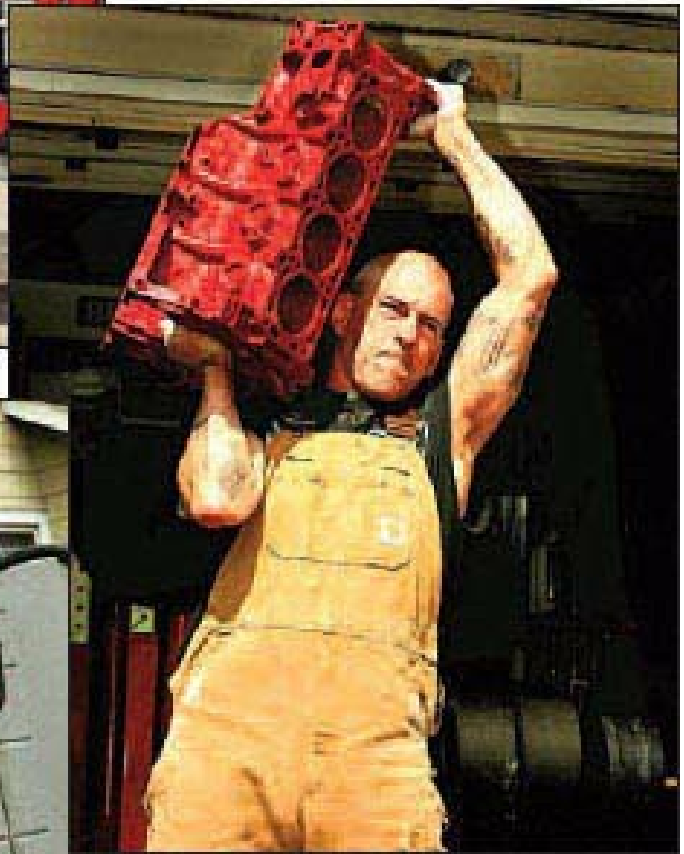
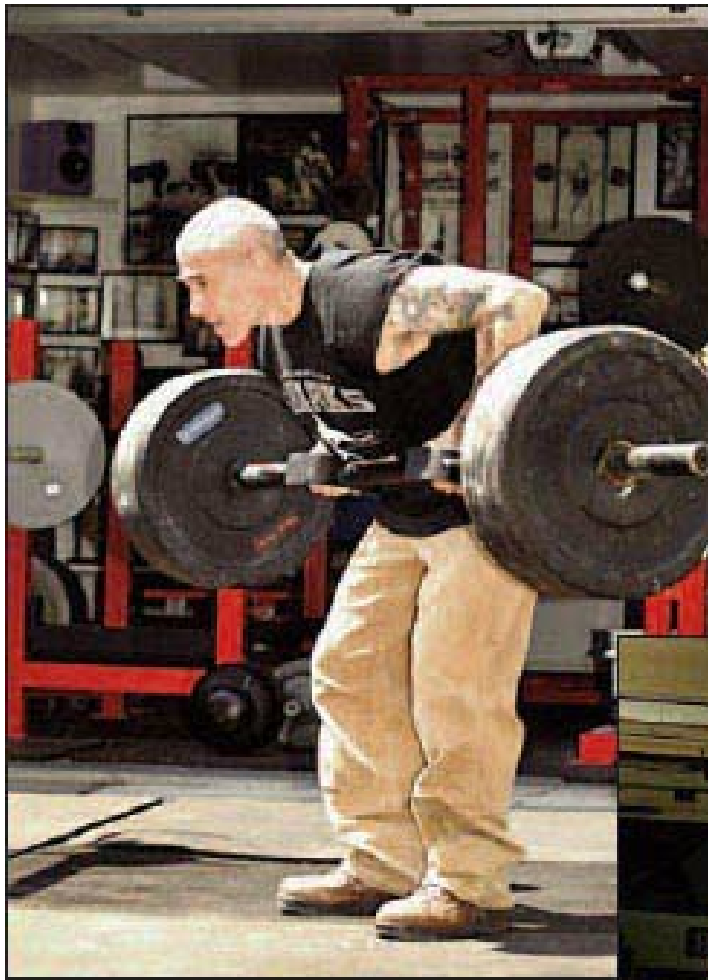
I missed the articles by Dr. Ken Leistner from the mid 80s – articles in which he discussed having his kids and athletes use odd objects such as anvils, empty bombs, I Beams with handles welded onto them, and thick bars. He used a wide variety of crazy training tools, including pushing cars. There were few in the know about this style of old school strength training back in the 80s and early 90s, and I unfortunately was not part of the few.

But, as they say, what's old is new again.

Every article I read was about feeling your muscle, squeezing the muscle, constant tension - never locking out on pushing movements to keep pressure on the muscles. There were no articles that told me that I should regularly partake in heavy squats, heavy deadlifting, and farmer walks. Nothing told me about the importance of ripping weights from the ground and pressing them overhead to develop brute strength. That stuff was taboo in the magazines, and none of the people using these methods were writing books on this stuff, at least none that I came across and trust me, I was in every local bookstore imaginable.



Dr Ken showing how it's done old school.

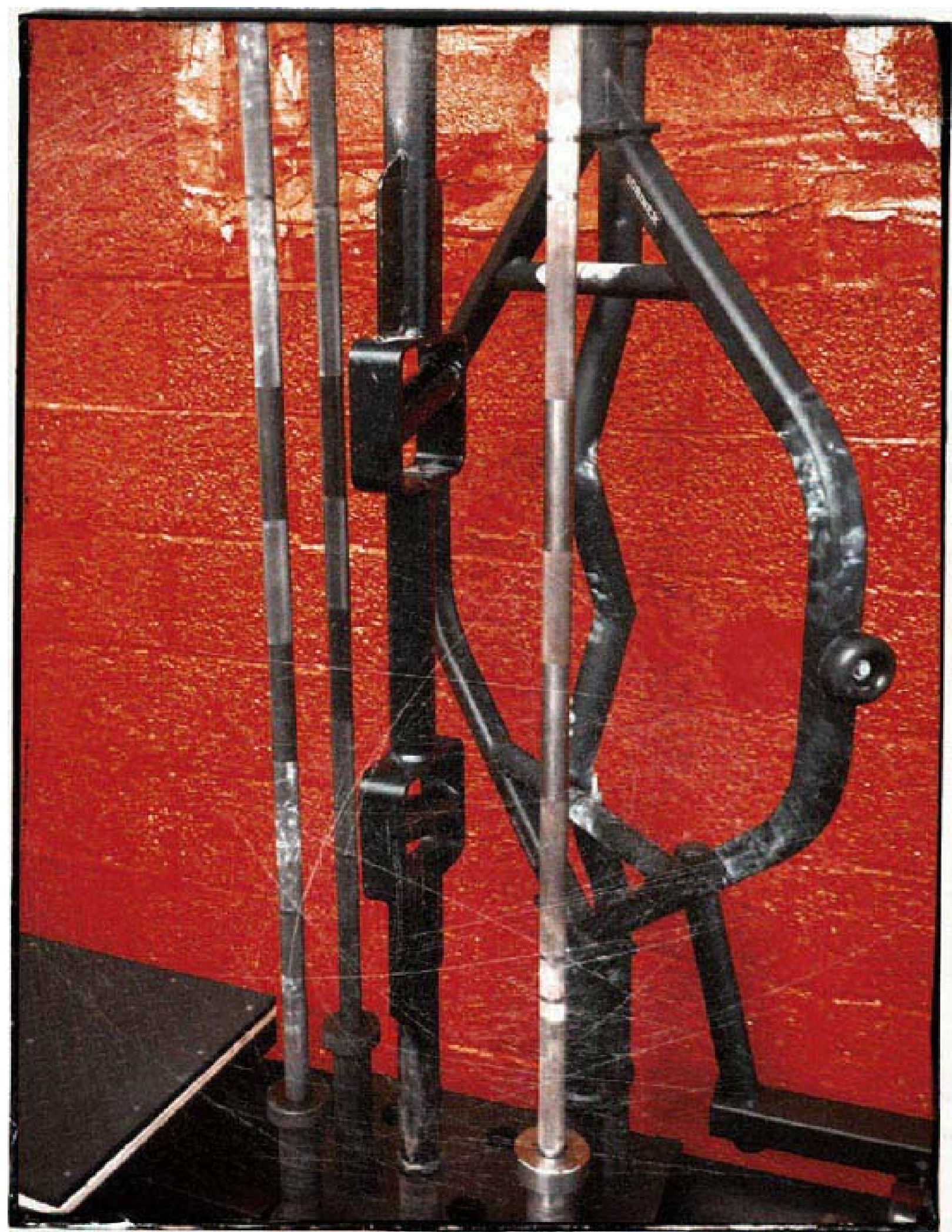


Dr Ken Leistner deadlifting back in the day.

Little did I know—or even understand—that there was a difference between looking strong and truly being strong. Nowadays, people call this “functional strength” or “functional training.” Back in the day, there was no such terminology. Powerlifting magazines were not found on any of the magazine racks I came across. Everything I read was about building your biceps, performing cable crossovers, and using the pec deck.

Everyone was told to wear weightlifting belts, even when doing exercises like lat pull-downs and seated dumbbell curls. Grip strength? Nope. We all were encouraged to use wrist straps so we could focus on squeezing the lats and taking the grip out of the equation.

No one encouraged me to use my grip and develop powerful hands through training. I should have paid closer attention to all those aw-inspiring black and white photos of Arnold and his buddies. They never wore wrist straps to aid the grip during pull ups, dead-lifts, barbell rows, and the like and they DID train heavy.



LEARNING THE HARD WAY

They say pain is the best teacher. I hope this doesn't have to be the case for you. I hope you are willing to learn from my pain to avoid unnecessary pain of your own. I learned the hard way, mostly as a high school wrestler, that the training I performed was little to no use at all when it came to improving my performance physically or mentally. My freshman year was my first year in wrestling; my older brother convinced me that this was the most awesome sport known to mankind and that I should stop playing soccer and become a wrestler.

At the time, wrestling was not the most awesome sport for a kid like me who didn't have a tough or mean bone in his body. I grew up riding my bike and playing soccer, neither of which made me tough. My parents grew up in Romania and Israel, and sports such as football and baseball were foreign to them, literally.

Wrestling certainly has a way of teaching you about life and what it takes to succeed beyond sports.

If you want to be a successful wrestler, you gotta have 2 things:

- 1) You have to be tough - physically and mentally.
- 2) You have to be strong.

Coach Ethan Reeve impressed that upon me, and boy is he right!

When I started wrestling as a 13-year-old freshman in high school, I didn't have the sort of mental edge that a successful combat athlete should have. In addition, I was very young for my grade. I was 13 years old my freshman year, while other kids were 14 and some were even 15. Mentally, I was immature. I had no killer instinct whatsoever.



I got my ass kicked my entire freshman year. In fact, I got pinned every single match. It sucked BIG time. It was the beginning of a very difficult time in my life. Losing my wrestling matches time and time again was very depressing when all I could think of was how hard I worked in the gym and how little it paid off on the mat. My muscles were untrained for this type of sport, and my mind was not trained to struggle and fight through the pretty boy bodybuilding style I was implementing.

I thought the only way to get better was to improve my wrestling skills and to keep bodybuilding. The improvement of wrestling skills was critical. The bodybuilding BS, however, was not. I did get stronger and bigger, but my muscles were more show than they were go, if you catch my drift.

Every time wrestling season came around I made a serious mistake, something I still see being made to this day by countless athletes along with their coaches and parents — I stopped lifting weights altogether when the sport season began. I stopped lifting, and as crappy as my training was, when you stop training for strength you not only lose strength, but you also lose other physical qualities, while increasing your chances of injury.

Strength is the foundation upon which you build your speed, stamina, injury prevention, and confidence. Without strength, you become just like everyone else and soon enough you have no edge over the competition.

I thought I should go running every other night instead of lifting. I copied the others and followed the herd. Not sure how or why that stupid idea came to me, but I learned the hard way that it was the wrong way. There was no common sense behind my choices, and absolutely no listening to my body and the way it responded to training.

The excess conditioning and high volume running actually made me weaker, decreased my confidence, and always burnt me out both physically and mentally. I never learned because I thought that there was only one way. Don't make that mistake of being stuck in a rut; there are many correct ways to reach your goals.

As soon as my freshman wrestling season was over, I jumped back into training at the gym. In fact, I couldn't wait to start pumping iron again. Other wrestlers would take time off, but I never did. To this day, I see athletes taking weeks and even months off after they finish their sports season. When I see that, I see laziness and a lack of passion for becoming strong. I also see a lack of joy in their training if they have no excitement about getting back to training. Training should be fun for you, even when it's brutally challenging.

I would return to the gym the very same day the season would end for me. I couldn't even wait for the next day to train.

Although I was stuck doing the usual bodybuilding stuff — leg extensions, the pec deck, pushdowns, side lateral raises, all that pump style training — I was loving the training. I would get my best feelings about life when training. Even though I didn't see why my training wasn't helping me become a great champion wrestler, the experience of training was so fulfilling that I loved every part of it.

The pretty boy training regimes that I was learning from these magazines and books were NOT pushing my physical or mental boundaries, and certainly not my spiritual ones.

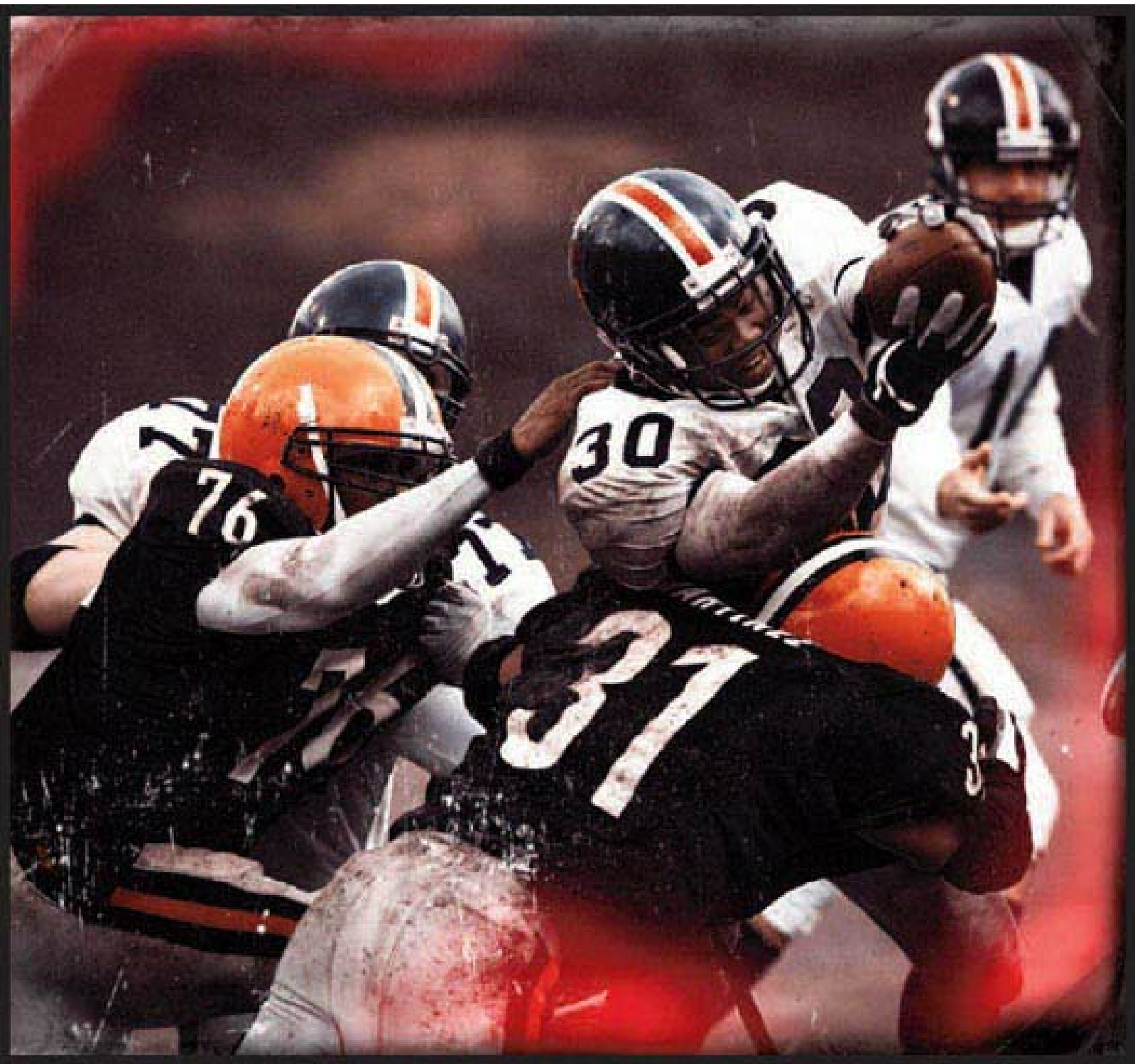
As often as I could, I would watch all the bodybuilding shows on ESPN and record them on VHS. I would cut school if the shows aired on weekdays during school hours. After recording those shows I would watch them over and over again. Not only did I have piles and piles of bodybuilding magazines, I was now accumulating piles of bodybuilding shows

on VHS tape.

Each bodybuilding show would highlight bodybuilding maneuvers and showcase a bodybuilder and his workouts. I always recall the bodybuilder being showcased was performing every exercise in slow motion, stretching, squeezing, picture perfect technique.

This pretty boy, picture perfect training never trained me to overcome obstacles, to strain and struggle through brutal workouts, or to develop explosiveness to dominate on the mat or in life. If you want to do some pump and show training, do it AFTER you've busted your back kicking some serious ass through your workout. It's like eating dessert. You don't eat your cake first. You eat your steak and potatoes first, and if you crushed a brutal workout that day, then you've earned the right to eat some cake.

Although my bodybuilding workouts were challenging — using intense bodybuilding methods such as drop sets, supersets, volume training, and more — and although the muscles would burn and I had to fight through the lactic acid pain barrier, these methods didn't give me the type of overpowering strength and explosive power I REALLY needed to dominate as a wrestler.



EAGLES FOOTBALL & THE EYE OF THE TIGER

When I was in high school, the football team was a force to be reckoned with. I remember seeing those guys in the hallway, wearing their Edison Eagles football jerseys on game days. The guys were BIG and they ran the weight room, which was a small, cramped dungeon.

After school, almost every day, you could hear the echoing sounds of The Rocky IV soundtrack from the weight room down the hallway. The football team trained in that weight room, as did the head coach, Mr. Wojcik. Coach Wojcik trained WITH his players.

The weight room was small and simple. There was a Nautilus machine, 2 flat benches, an incline bench, a seated military press bench, some dumbbells and a small squat cage.

I remember walking by the weight room and peaking through the glass window to see what was going on. There was a line 10 deep behind BOTH benches. Coach Wojcik was training with his team, and he lifted just as heavy as they did, set for set, rep for rep.

Even the quarterback, their smallest player, was benching heavy. The QB was given no special treatment for his rotator cuff or his arm; there were no fears of injury in this weight room.

All the guys were using 45 and 25-lb plates on the bar. Only the Quarterback used a 10-lb plate, and that was when he was benching 245 lbs. I watched the other guys bench for sets of 2 - 5 reps. 135 lbs, then 185, 225, 275, and 315. A few guys went to 335 lbs on the bench.

I remember how they would all put their feet on the bench and then hump the sky as they would bench, using hips and full body to bench. I thought they were idiots. Shame on me. They were winning. A LOT. The other teams feared them, and they were respected. Their training wasn't perfect, but it was intense and passionate.

The football team stuck to the basics. Bench press, seated press behind the neck, barbell cheat curls, and squats were happening every time I walked by the weight room.

Mr. Wojcik got his team STRONG. Through their strength came confidence, power, and mental toughness. They trained together as a team — one powerful unit all with the same attitude and same mindset.

The program wasn't anywhere near perfect or even balanced, but the team learned how to fight in that weight room. They learned how to fight against big weights, pushing each other with encouragement. This built up their confidence to go to war together, which is how football is played. Confidence is a key factor for success in sports and life. Training

properly will train you for success in all areas of your life, not just in sports.

Nowadays, the team aspect is a BIG component missing in team strength and conditioning. Every kid wants a special program, even though he can't even do a squat with proper technique. People are missing the boat, and I blame the confusion on the overabundance of information, not all of which is accurate.

Another BIG aspect missing from a strength training program is that of developing strength. Ironic. You cannot call it strength and conditioning if you are not training to be stronger or encouraged to lift heavy AND with proper form.

When I was in my mid-20s and coaching wrestling, the high school wrestling coach told me a story about how he had a wrestler who was highly skilled but just not tough enough and not mean enough to achieve success at the higher levels.

The coach told me that he encouraged this wrestler to play football his senior year. The goal was to use football to get the kid meaner and tougher through hitting and being hit. It worked. The kid played football his senior year. This was his first year as a football player. As soon as football season ends, wrestling season begins.

The coach told me that this athlete's final high school wrestling season was his most successful season. . Never before was he able to qualify for the state tournament, but he did in his senior year. He was tougher and meaner, and those were the two traits that he was missing. They were also the barriers he needed to break through to qualify for the state tournament.

I look back and realize I could have used these tools. I could have gotten meaner, tougher, and stronger. I could have spent more time lifting heavy and learning lessons by getting hit and hitting on the football field. Live and learn. Lift and learn. Not everyone is naturally tough, I certainly wasn't one of those guys who had an edge from the get-go. I had to earn it!

FUNCTIONAL TRAINING

M

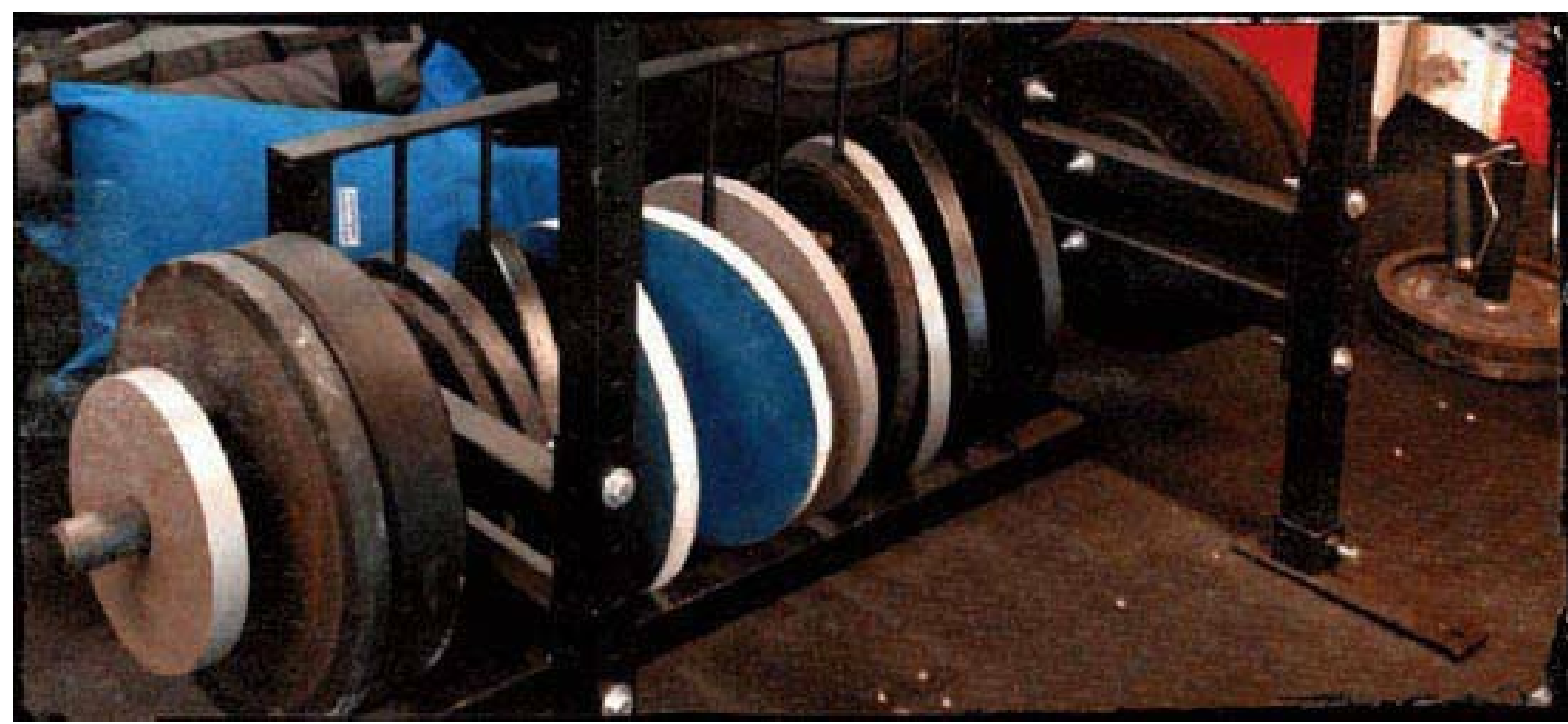
y high school years were 1989 through 1993. At that time, the masses didn't know about things like functional training or sports-specific training, and these words weren't even used to describe training. . Bodybuilding was THE way. You would go to the gym and you would see a few athletes from other schools in there, and you assumed you were in the right place.

With nowhere else to turn to learn methods outside of the guys at the local gym and the magazines, this struggle and confusion as to how to develop "functional strength" continued year after year for me.

I continued to devour all the bodybuilding magazines. I was gaining lean muscle mass, getting bigger and more muscular, yet I was getting more confused and frustrated as to why I kept losing wrestling matches, even though I looked bigger and stronger than my competition.

I remember the thoughts running through my head when I did NOT feel stronger than my opponent, the confusion when I would gas out after the first period (two minutes) of the match, and the frustration when my hands felt as if they couldn't hold onto my opponent after the first period. It was frustrating and confusing beyond belief. It wreaked havoc on my mindset during my matches, and my performance suffered.

There are beach muscles and there are muscles that can get the job done. Unfortunately, my body was primarily made up of beach muscles. As I mentioned earlier, when I entered my freshman year in high school, I weighed a mere 120 pounds. When I graduated, I was 175 pounds with big legs, wide lats, a sculpted chest, ripped abs, and muscular arms. I was proud of the physical transformation I'd achieved, but was completely disappointed in my lack of wrestling success. I tried to let it go and move on, but deep down, my lack of wrestling success continued to nag at me.



By the time I entered college, only 10 weeks after high school graduation, I was already 185 pounds – a solid 10 pounds heavier. Bodybuilding was my sole focus. I wanted and needed a break from wrestling, and felt an urge to compete against myself only. I was tired of the frustration and didn't want to go through those feelings again. I didn't succeed as a wrestler, yet I felt I truly could succeed as a competitive bodybuilder.

My freshman year in college, my school had a powerful wrestling team, ranked top 10 in the country. It was tempting to get back into wrestling, but in my heart the urge to wrestle just wasn't there.

I learned through wrestling how the mind can determine success or failure. I took those lessons and began focusing positive thoughts on my bodybuilding aspirations.

I began to live in the gym — literally. I would work out twice a day on most days. Being in college was awesome because of the flexible class schedule. Instead of doing my homework at home, I did my homework in the gym sitting at the counter, just so I could listen to the sound of weights dropping on the floor or weights clanking together as I did my school work.

I felt as if I just HAD to be among the weights. The gym was that one place where I found solace. It was the one place where I would lose myself and find myself all at the same time.

As a college freshman, I was only 17 years old. Young by today's standards. I was still immature and learning who I was and what I was capable of. My confidence was not all that high except in the gym. After four years of working hard in wrestling and losing year after year, my heart and soul had a lot of scars.

MIND OVER MATTER & MR. ISRAEL

**"I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul."**

— Portion Of Poem, Invictus /William Ernest Henley

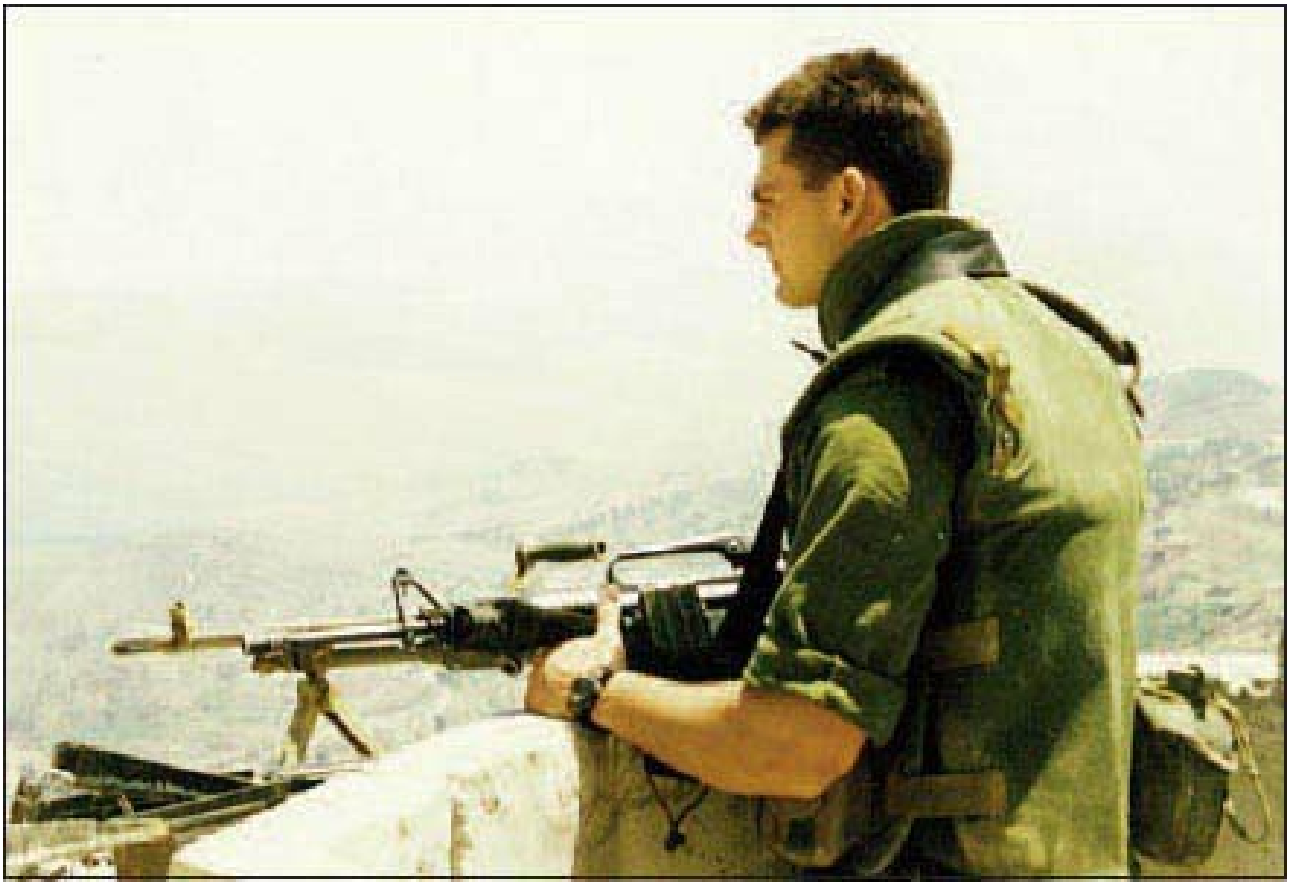
In the early winter of my freshman year, 1993, I began to go through a tough time. I was having a difficult time in college and was not prepared for the classes I was in. I was placed on academic probation and felt like a lost soul.

I went into a bout of depression, and I had NO clue how to battle through life's obstacles.

I tried to use my bodybuilding training to keep me happy, but I struggled to pull myself up and above the challenges I was facing in college. I was too young to understand how to harness the power of the mind.

I was stuck in time, literally. I was alive but not truly living. During this depression, I allowed my feelings to ruin practically everything in my life.

My grades were low in almost all of my classes. I wasn't getting stronger, I wasn't putting on more muscle, and I was having an extremely difficult time grappling with what I wanted to do with my life. I would wake up depressed and walk around depressed.



My brother Eilon in the Israeli Army

I thought about Arnold Schwarzenegger. He explained that, as a bodybuilder, you must become cold and not allow outside negativity to bring you down. I tried to control my mind that way, but I did not understand how to do it at such a young age. My emotions controlled me, rather me being the master of my own emotions.

I was stuck in a state of depression for six months. I had no clue how to control the mind or how to react to a negative situation with power. It would become one of the most important lessons of my life.

The summer before my sophomore year in college, I was once again slated to travel to Israel with my family. I was so depressed that I did not want to go. All I wanted to do was survive through this time, nothing more. My parents were completely disappointed in me. They didn't want to leave me home alone and so they read me the riot act. So, without any options, I traveled to Israel with my family.

My older brother at the time was in the Israeli Army and he had told me that a gym had opened up in the small town where my grandparents lived – a very small gym. He told me of some crazy “dude” named Joe who had come to Israel from Miami and was training to become an Israeli Navy Seal. The Israeli SEAL Team was known as The Shayetet.

Joe was an extremely tough guy, both physically and mentally. He was lifting weights almost everyday and every other day he was swimming and running to prepare for The

I remember the first night I got to Israel I went straight to "Avner's Gym." Training was the only thing that kept me going through my depression. I jogged to the gym, which was about a mile away from my Grandparent's home.

It felt great breathing in the fresh air as I jogged through town to the gym. There was a different smell in the air in Israel compared to New Jersey. I always feel energized by the fresh air, no matter where I am. It does something empowering for the mind and body. Even when the weather is cold I get outside and do some training in the fresh air. The cold weather also keeps me tough. I fear getting too comfortable and cozy with the heat and the perfect environment.

I was psyched to show up at a gym and no longer be a skinny, weak 120-lb kid. There would be NO crying this time around. It was quiet when I got there, as it was late and closing time was a short 45 minutes away. Most people were probably home, getting ready for bed, watching TV, doing things that "normal" people do at this time of night. I got busy right away with a shoulder and arm work out.

The owner of the gym, Avner, was also an Israeli bodybuilding judge. When he saw me cranking out my workout and found out that I was only 18 years old, he quickly showed me a poster on the wall that showed that the Mr. Israel bodybuilding contest was only 3 weeks away. He insisted that I compete as a teenager and represent his gym in the only bodybuilding show in Israel.

I was so depressed that I immediately refused to compete. My state of mind was in such a downward spiral that I was going through the motions during my workouts without an ounce of belief in myself.

But as you'll learn as you continue reading, it is tough times that have inspired me to help change the lives of others in the form of achieving success in life AND training, which BOTH go hand in hand.

During my first week in Israel, I was training almost every single day at Avner's Gym. Every time Avner saw me, he kept telling me that I HAD to compete in the Mr. Israel bodybuilding contest. Every time Avner insisted, I replied with a "NO," and he would shake his head in disbelief.

I was training alone that first week, and after each workout, I would walk or jog home and ask myself, "Is this what you're going to do? Are you going to make excuses for yourself and not step up to challenges? Are you going to regret this decision for the rest of your life?"

I was trying to pull myself out of depression, but couldn't find a way to muster the inner strength to do so. Even worse, I did not know HOW to think like a champion and rise

above setbacks. I was stuck in a slump, and had no clue what to do, until a friend of mine saw how depressed I was. He helped me by telling me to ask myself one simple, powerful question every morning.

My friend, Amir, told me point blank that my negative attitude about the world was holding me back in life. He gave me a short lecture that hit home very deeply for me. He told me that I can't go walking around like a deadman, like a zombie. He said that that I need to wake up with excitement for my day, every single day. Rather than being depressed, I should ask myself a beautiful question and say things like: 'Today will be a beautiful day. What beautiful things will today bring me?'

As strange and corny as it all sounds to some people, Amir was spot on. I remember how his lecture on being happy and how to change the words I use on a daily basis hit me like a ton of bricks that night.

I woke up the next morning and did as Amir said I should. I told myself how my day would go and asked myself the question, "Today will be a beautiful day! What beautiful things will today bring me!?!?"

My answer, every morning to my question was always, "ONLY beautiful things!" Yep, sounds like a fairy tale, but after walking around like a zombie for 6 months this feeling of happiness was something amazing to me.

I woke up that morning feeling like a new man, ready to take on the world and ready to kick ass and take names in everything and anything I wanted.

It was as if I had been reborn. I drew a line in the sand and refused to go back to those days of depression. I realized that I spent six months of my life not TRULY living.

I began to learn the power of thoughts and the power of words. Amir was right - I was like the walking dead, a zombie. I was merely existing, NOT truly living. That same day during breakfast, I told my parents and my grandparents that I was going to compete in the Mr. Israel contest and that it was only two weeks away. I said the only way that I could compete was if they helped me by cooking six meals a day for me.

Back then, that was the diet protocol that bodybuilders followed. You were advised to eat six meals a day if you were a bodybuilder, period, every three hours on the dot. My mom and grandmother said they would absolutely help me. I think they were excited to see a smile on my face! It was game ON!

I went to the gym that very same day with passion, excitement, a brand new attitude, and what felt like a brand new start on life. I was ready to tear the gym apart and was going to do everything I could to win "The Young Mr. Israel" bodybuilding contest.

I remember jogging to the gym that day, preparing for my final chance to tell Avner

whether I was going to compete or not. He asked me every day if I would compete until the last day I was in the gym. He told me he would give me one final chance to "think about it" and that I HAD to give him a final answer on Monday.

I rushed into the gym that Monday with a smile on my face. It looked as if Avner was waiting around for me ALL day to show up, pacing at his gym waiting for me to give him my final answer.

When I walked through the gym doors he didn't even say hello. He asked me immediately, "So? Will you compete?" I told him, "YES! I'm going to compete!"



As soon as I answered Avner, it was just like he flipped a switch. Immediately he said to me, "Then we need to train." It reminded me of Rocky III, when Rocky told Mickey that he was going to fight Clubber Lang and that he was going to WIN this time around.

Mickey immediately started training Rocky harder than ever before, and that's exactly what we did. Avner, Joe, and I began training like mad men possessed — twice a day, every day. The training was extremely intense for those two weeks leading up to the show, yet so amazing that I was numb to any pain or discomfort in my workouts.

Here we were, the three of us, all motivated to the extreme and we scared the heck out of the gym members with our intensity.

Avner's gym was very basic. There were dumbbells, a cable crossover machine, a dip bar, and the squat rack was actually attached to the bench. We had to raise the uprights of the bench up high and straddle the bench to unrack the bar when squatting. It was scary, and I always thought the bench would flip over when I racked my squat bar. It was nerve wracking to squat anything over 225 lbs on that bench, not knowing if it would flip over or stay upright!

We trained heavy and we trained hard, competing against one another during every workout. My energy was through the roof. I realized how my depression sucked the energy out of me like a never ending vacuum. My new mindset gave me an energy that felt unstoppable. I would train in the morning with Avner and I would come back again in the evening, to train with Joe and Avner. During the day Joe would be running, swimming, and scuba diving as part of his training.

At night I would finish my training while also practicing my bodybuilding poses for another hour. My diet immediately tightened up. I stopped eating all breads, milk, and dairy and all I ate was chicken, vegetables and eggs. I felt like I was Arnold Schwarzenegger training for his first bodybuilding contest in a different country.



The two weeks that led to the contest flew by. The day before the Mr. Israel contest, there was a meeting for all competitors at the location of the contest. I remember showing up at the meeting as if it just happened yesterday.

It was a huge amphitheater. It looked like a place where the ancient Romans would have wrestling matches, or where the Gladiators would battle. The place gave off an electric energy unlike any place I've ever experienced.

The amphitheater had an open ceiling, enabling you to see the beautiful sky up above as fresh air swooped through the entire arena. It was truly an amazing venue. I was extremely nervous when I showed up for the meeting, as this was when we would hear about the rules and any other important details we had to know as competitors.

Avner, the owner of the gym, was also there, as the judges for the Israeli Bodybuilding Federation would be discussing the rules with us. There were just shy of 20 competitors for the teenage division, 18 years and under.

The other teenagers saw me and quickly began sizing me up. I showed up in shorts and a tank top with plans of psyching out the competition the way Arnold always played mind games with his competition. I knew the psychology behind winning and losing was powerful, and I was determined to let it work for me rather than against me. I wasn't planning on reliving my mistakes. The other teens were wearing long sweat pants and those old school baggy bodybuilding sweat shirts. They looked HUGE under all their baggy clothes.

I remember being nervous when I sized them up from the corner of my eye and saying to myself, "Holy crap! These dudes look huge." During the contest, I learned that they were NOT so big. It was the clothing they wore that made them look so jacked. They were all wearing several shirts under those sweat shirts that made them look bigger than what they truly were.

During the meeting to go over the rules, the other teenagers were immediately asking me questions like, "Wow! You're so big, how's the stomach look?" I said, "The stomach is fine." I didn't speak such great Hebrew, but I understood that they were trying to psyche me out and get into my head. They were the nervous ones – even more so than me.

The next day, when the bodybuilding competition began, we had to meet in the basement of the amphitheater. I found that strange and I was told that this was simply another opportunity for the judges to discuss the rules with us. Not knowing how they run bodybuilding shows in Israel, I just went with the flow and pumped up in a small room in the basement, away from all the other teens.

It felt amazing to me that I was in this whirlwind of action, from depression to living my dreams of being a bodybuilder. I felt like I was inside of Arnold Schwarzenegger's body as the competition began — in the basement nonetheless, which is exactly how he started in his first American bodybuilding show!

I vividly recall how Arnold spoke about his first time in America competing in unknown

territory, pumping up his body in the basement before stepping on stage, doing pushups in between chairs to get his chest pumped up through an extended range of motion.

That is exactly what I did. I copied Arnold. Joe was with me the entire time, keeping me motivated and focused to keep pumping up until they called us to compete. I had NO clue what was going on.

Joe went to the main pump up room where all the other teens were warming up and grabbed a barbell and brought it over to me. They stared at him in shock as he walked around and grabbed weights for me, keeping others away from me as I pumped up in that small back room, closed off from everyone else.

The other teenagers were trying to get near me as I pumped up using push ups, barbell rows, curls and calf raises. He wouldn't let them go near me and guarded me like a pit bull.

The other teens were watching my every move, and one of the teenagers started to encourage me, shouting in his best English, "YES! Good job! Good job!" Joe shouted at the kid and told him, "NO!" The combination of Joe's yelling and my focus and size scared the kid.

I realized that they saw I had fire in my eyes, and I was like a Gladiator, ready to destroy my competition. It was the first time in my life that I truly felt confident in what I could do and what I was all about. Everything that I had done to get to this point had me fired up. I believed in myself! It felt amazing.

As soon as a few other teenagers tried to encourage me more, Joe quickly told them, "NO! Leave him alone!" They were shaken by Joe's protectiveness. I saw the look in their eyes. They were scared and they had also realized I was there to win and everyone else was there for second place.



While I waited for the judges to call us and continued to pump up, one of the teenagers accused me of being on steroids. They told me I got my steroids from Mr. Weider. Joe Weider, was the face for all bodybuilding magazines, exercise equipment and supplements since Arnold was a teenager and leading up to decades onward.

I was offended that someone would accuse me of being on steroids and I learned that people who don't understand what gut busting hard work and commitment are don't understand what it takes to get results from training. They are always looking for a short cut, a magic pill or training routine with "secrets" in it.

Whenever I think of how that conversation went with the other teens I laugh my ass off because I understand how people think nowadays with all their excuses.. But at that time, as a young kid who was only 18, I clearly remember getting upset that people were accusing me of steroid use, because deep down I knew that I had been busting my butt in

the gym since age 13 1/2. I vividly remembered how I outworked everyone I trained with in every gym I trained out of. I truly believed I was the most committed, most hard working teenage bodybuilder in the world.

It's a shame to see how people are accused of steroid use simply because they are stronger than average. People don't understand that through commitment and hard work, results come. You don't need steroids! You need to train with consistency, intensity and heavy weights. You need to live the lifestyle, eating and sleeping as required to recover and fuel the mind and body for maximum results. It's commitment all the way, there is no half way.

Although I was training like a bodybuilder and not a wrestler, I felt I had finally found my world. Bodybuilding was what I had lived for my entire teenage life. I was shocked by the steroid accusation, and it stumped me for a few minutes, getting into my head, causing me to try and defend my hard work in the gym since age 13. The other teens didn't understand what I was trying to explain to them about working hard to achieve results. To truly understand, you had to train with me and see how dedicated I was to eating, sleeping, and training as a lifestyle, not some half assed hobby.

Other older lifters at the gym I trained out of in NJ said there is no way someone can train as hard as I do without being on steroids. Those same people obviously never wrestled. Wrestling taught me about intensity.

As soon as they announced that the teens would be getting called on stage, I was back in action, focused, and ready to represent my commitment and dedication as a bodybuilder.

My mind was confident and strong. I'm not sure if I was more excited to finally have a smile on my face and feel confident after my 6 months of depression or if it was because I was standing in front of well over 1,000 people. It had been a long freakin' time since I had walked around with a smile on my face, that's for sure.

I got up on that stage when they asked the teenagers to file side by side. I felt like I was at home. I had practiced posing thousands of times in front of a mirror, as does any bodybuilder. My family and friends were there shouting my name, and I heard a monster of a roar from the crowd when I walked out, louder than the cheer other kids received. My confidence grew even greater.





This was a different kind of bodybuilding show, not like those I had seen in America. In America, they call you out individually and have you hold certain poses. In Israel, everything was a pose-down against the entire group of competitors. It was like a non-stop battle on stage.

The amphitheater was packed full house, shouting and cheering, the entire place was going wild. The music was pumping loudly and it echoed just perfectly through the amphitheater and into the sky.

The evening sun was setting overhead and the stars were making their way above us as more and more people were screaming and shouting. The competition went by in the blink of an eye. When the countless pose-downs finally ended for the teens, they began

announcing the top five. My nerves were on edge, as I still wasn't sure what the judges thought. I assumed from the roar of the crowd I had first place locked up, but you can never be too sure.

When the judges got to the top three, I was even more nervous, and they called for another pose -down, asking the crowd to cheer for their favorite one last time. I was exhilarated by all the energy and they moved on to announcing third place, second place and finally, first place! When the dust settled I was announced the winner of Young Mr. Israel, 1994. The crowd was shouting like crazy, and all my friends were there.

After I accepted my trophy it was time for the adult men and women to compete. I went back stage and got changed into my street clothes to go out and meet my family and friends. 

When I made my way out to the hallway entrance there was a massive crowd of people, along with many young kids in their early teens, crowding me, many congratulating me, and others asking me bodybuilding questions on how to get bigger chest muscles, bigger biceps, and so on. I tried to answer them all the best way I could with my limited Hebrew, and I felt as if I was Arnold, living through his adventures that he wrote about in his book, **The Education of a Bodybuilder.**

STRONG MIND, STRONG BODY

About 2 weeks after The Mr. Israel Bodybuilding Contest, we returned home to New Jersey. I was reborn, stronger than ever mentally, emotionally, and physically.



Within two weeks of returning home and training with my renewed passion for training and life, I went from 185 to 196 pounds. I had gained over 10 lbs in 2 weeks! I quickly learned that the power of the mind is the most crucial aspect in achieving success.

I assessed my past and why I didn't progress. I realized that my depression literally halted me from all muscle growth and strength gains. I was stuck at 185 pounds for the entire six months that I was depressed. Not one ounce of strength or muscle gain happened during that depressed period of my life.

As soon as I changed my mindset and took control of my life, my body followed suit as did success in all other areas of my life did. This negative way of thinking & trying to always be perfect is exactly what stopped my success as a wrestler back in high school, and ultimately stopped my happiness. Perfection will never happen. Instead of beating yourself up over not being perfect, focus on the progress you make, this allows you to celebrate every small victory in life.

I've learned that when you measure progress, it is best to measure against where you once were, not where you want to go. Your goals will motivate you to push harder and achieve more, but celebrating and recognizing progress keeps your spirits high, which leads to being happy on a regular basis. Don't underestimate the power of happiness!



With my new attitude I became excited for life and everything that was involved in my life - be it school, training, or enjoying time with my friends. I was actually excited about becoming more successful in all areas of my life, and doing what I had to do in order to be consistently happy. I had spent so many years facing adversity and being disappointed in myself that being happy was the coolest thing in the world to me.

The past was such a hellish time for me, but if I never experienced such pain in my life I am not so sure I'd be here today, on a mission to help others become stronger in life and lifting. My mission is what I am so passionate about, from the time I wake up to the time I go to sleep, it's a switch that I can never turn off.

"I think you were put on this earth to make people strong!"

A close friend of mine, Ryan Lee, once told me over dinner as we discussed my plan to open my gym and move out of my garage gym, "I think you were put on this earth to make people strong!" That conversation and that sentence he gave me changed my life forever.

He's right! That is my mission and my purpose. Being strong has a powerful beauty behind it. The process and the result of training for greater strength is truly amazing.

Adding 10 lbs to your best deadlift, finally being able to squat twice your bodyweight, and similar achievements will and should push you towards commitment to a lifetime of training. Even after you are finished with competitive sports or retired from a job that requires you to be fit and strong, you must still train. You must always train for life.

Don't ever forget that!

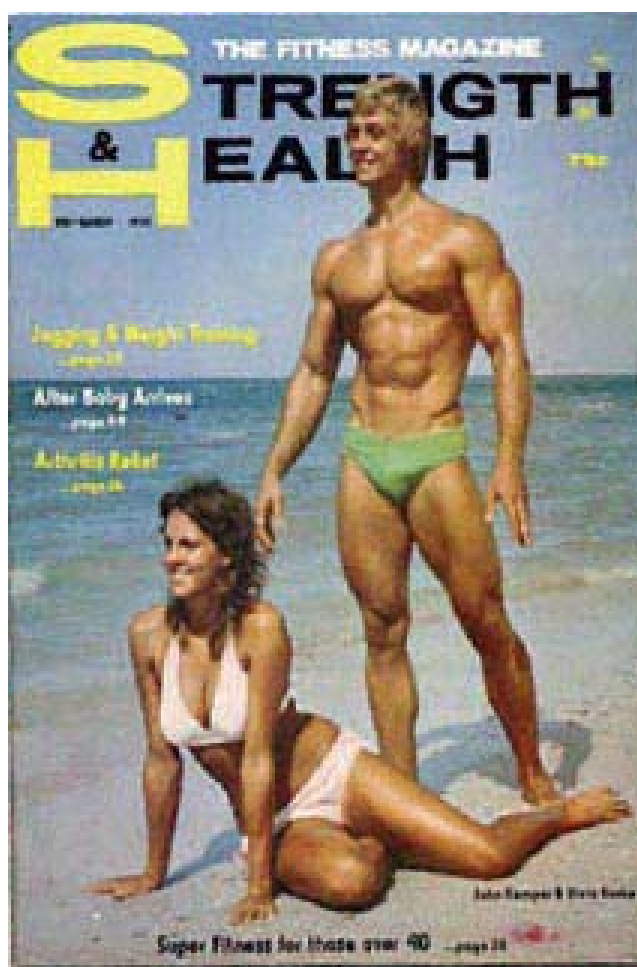
DIAMOND GYM

After returning from Israel, I was now a sophomore in college. I continued to train almost every day — usually two to three days in a row, and then I would take a day off to rest. I left the gym that I used to train at and joined a hardcore bodybuilding gym. This gym was known for it's hardcore atmosphere. Every bodybuilder and lifter in this gym, man or woman, regardless of age, respected strength and trained in such a fashion.

The name of this gym was Diamond Gym, owned by a former Golden Era bodybuilder himself, John Kemper. There was no sign out front and the first time I went looking for the gym I must have passed it six or seven times, driving up and down the same road. I finally saw three monster bodybuilders sitting on the front stairs outside the gym, eating their post workout meals, tipping me off to this amazing place.

The gym was located in an old bank. The dumbbells in this gym went past 150 pounds. Most of the plates were the old school York Barbell plates. There were LOTS of big dudes in there, and women too. Some were competitive bodybuilders, while others were simply dedicated to the iron.

Everyone understood the unspoken rule of that gym: Show up, train your ass off, and give your best — nothing less. Everyone was squatting heavy, deadlifting heavy, benching heavy. Every lift was heavy in that gym. EVERY lift. Go into most gyms and you will see that some lifts are heavy, but most lifts are very light. Not at Diamond Gym. These guys even did heavy barbell curls. How heavy? I had seen guys performing power curls at 225 and 275 lbs., and seated dumbbell curls with 100 lb dumbbells!



Diamond Gym founder, John Kemper from 1975 *Strength & Health* cover



Everywhere you looked, you were inspired by someone else, by a picture on the wall, or by the loud pumping music.

There wasn't a whole lot of focus on squeezing the muscle and using light pump-up weights at Diamond Gym. I was finally learning the right way to train for bodybuilding, and this gym was the perfect atmosphere for me. I fed off of everyone else's energy and the loud music. I was surrounded by passionate people, and I felt somewhat normal around people who thought about training with the same passion I did. I always felt like an outcast in the other gyms, with everyone telling me I was training too hard and too often, and trying to hold me back with their negative comments. Diamond Gym was like a throwback to the Golden Era where bodybuilders actually were strong, rather than just looking strong.

I had seen countless photos in Arnold's books of Golden Era Bodybuilders like Dave Draper, Arnold, Franco, and Ken Waller, always lifting heavy in their photos. In the movie *Pumping Iron*, you would see Arnold, Lou Ferrigno, Ed Corney, and Franco all lifting heavy. Diamond Gym was like being in a time machine compared to the other pretty boy bodybuilding gyms.



The lifters at Diamond Gym inspired me to become stronger in all my lifts, to break records, and to always push the envelope with strength and intensity. They taught me how to start training like a man.

It was here that I first came across bodybuilders performing things like heavy rack pulls on an old school York isometric rack. With their traps bursting from their shirts, their thick backs, and rugged physiques, I realized these guys truly understood what it really meant to train the right way.

With my new attitude and new training atmosphere, my workouts were going awesome, my strength was soaring through the roof, and my muscle gains were at an all time high. My grades in college went up, and everything in life was going great. The theory that positive people attract more success is true. The better your attitude and work ethic are, the more success you achieve. Whiners, complainers, and negative people are always in the dumps. I was done with those days!

While training at Diamond Gym, I ran into one of the bodybuilders, who was also a former wrestler from the area I lived in. He was training for the up and coming Mr. New Jersey Bodybuilding Championships, one of the toughest bodybuilding shows in the country. The show was six months out, and when he saw me, he told me how impressed he was with how much muscle I had put on since we'd last seen each other.

He asked me if I was planning to compete in an up and coming bodybuilding show, and I told him "Yes!" After I told him the name of the show, he asked, "Why don't you just compete with me in the Mr. New Jersey and enter the teen division?"

I told him that the first thing that I needed to do was ask my mom whether she would cook six meals a day for me leading up to the show. I told him, "If she says yes, I'll call you tonight and we'll make this happen."

I remember going home, excited as all heck for another bodybuilding show. I asked my mom the make or break question. I said, "Mom, I want to compete in the Teenage Mr. New Jersey, but I'm going to need your help. I'm going to need you to cook six meals a day for me. If you can't do this for even one of those days, or if you think you'll be too busy, please honestly let me know and I can't do this bodybuilding show. But, if you say yes, you have to be able to do this every day. Can you do this for me, Mom?" She said "YES!"

My Mom is amazing. Without her I never would have achieved my success. The way she would cook day in and day out is unreal. People thought she owned a restaurant because she bought so much food!

I called my friend that night with the good news and we began forging our new training plan to dominate our competition. On the phone that night, we organized our training schedule and agreed to push one another to levels of intensity unknown to anyone else! We were ready to go to war in the gym!

Diamond Gym was about 30 minutes away from where we lived, each way. My training

partner and I, both being former wrestlers, understood that these workouts would be brutally intense if we wanted to dominate the competition and WIN. Second place was NOT an option, we told one another. We knew that with our wrestler mentality, these workouts would be brutally intense.

Diamond Gym was known as the most hardcore gym in the world at the time. Every workout we went through was like a war. The first two months together, we trained 3 days a week.

Our split looked like this:



Monday: Shoulders & Arms

Wednesday: Legs

Friday: Chest & Back

We started every workout with heavy calf work and finished each workout with ab training. Our calf raises were performed extremely heavy, using the entire stack of weights and then adding 45-lb plates on top of the machine, loading up the calf machine to over 500 pounds.

The next two months, we bumped our training up to 4 days a week and our training split looked like this:



Monday: Chest, Bis

Tuesday: Legs

Thursday: Shoulders, Tris

Friday: Back

Our workouts were heavy and intense. My training partner would perform weighted chins with 90 lbs attached to a belt, and I always performed my chins with 35 - 45 lbs attached.



Squats, leg presses, barbell rows, weighted dips, military presses, RDLs (Romanian deadlifts), and heavy walking lunges were the norm. My body soaked up the basics like a sponge. We trained like powerlifters for the majority of our workouts, and then finished off with some bodybuilding work. We never went light.

During our last 2 months we used the same four-way training split, and now trained 2 days on, 1 day off. I would go to another local gym on my own almost every morning, do 45 minutes of cardio, and then practice my posing for another 45 minutes. Every other day I was in a tanning bed at 7 AM. My every day and entire life revolved around bodybuilding and school. My discipline in training and nutrition went through the roof, as did my intensity.

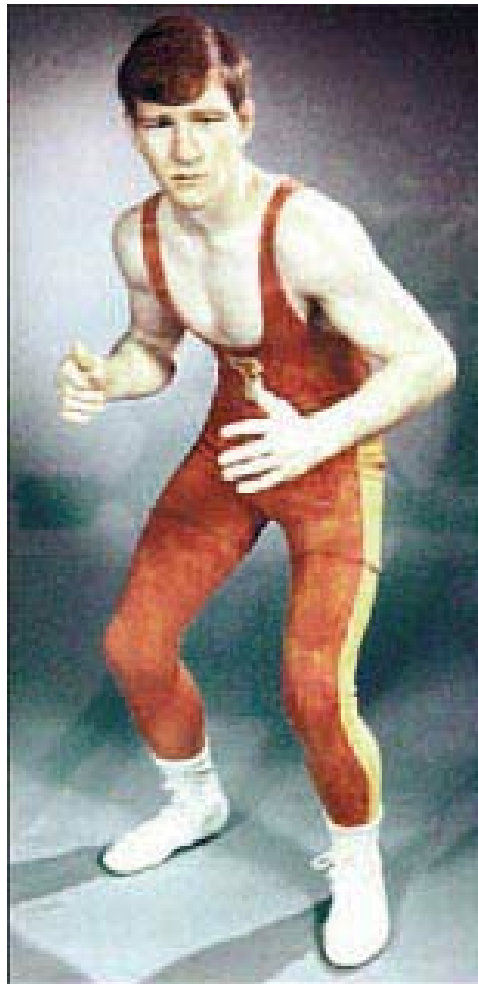
Every day I set my alarm and woke up at 7AM to eat my first meal. No matter what day of the week it was and no matter what time my college class began that day, my day always began at 7 AM, Monday through Sunday. Lights out, in bed at 11 PM, no matter what. I was committed to bodybuilding and that meant 8 hours of sleep and at least 6 meals a day.

Our training was not like the bodybuilding I saw in the magazines from my earlier years. No more pumping and feeling the muscles. We trained heavy and attacked the training old school style, like The Golden Era bodybuilders. My lifestyle was natural bodybuilding, which was pushing my intensity and commitment to even greater heights, knowing that I would be up against other teens using steroids.

Countless people told me that I wouldn't be able to compete in the Teen Mr. New Jersey contest as a natural bodybuilder. They said there's just no way I can compete against the teens on this level without taking steroids. I believed differently. I believed in the words spoken by Dan Gable, the most famous wrestler & wrestling coach in the world.

**"To be the Best
you have to
out-work the Best"**

— Dan Gable



Thanks to my new attitude on life, I refused to believe the naysayers and was ready to go to war to take first place and nothing less. I KNEW that no other teenager was training as intensely as I was, nor would they be as committed as I was to nutrition and lifestyle. I was going to use my wrestling mindset, my work ethic, and the life lessons I had already learned to ensure I won.

My goal, as crazy as this might sound to some, was to mentally and physically crush everyone who trained with my training partner or me. I wanted to make them want to quit and give up during our workout.

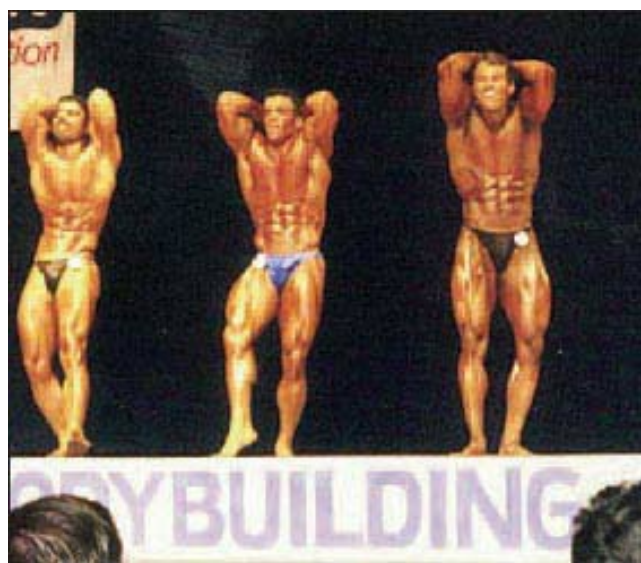
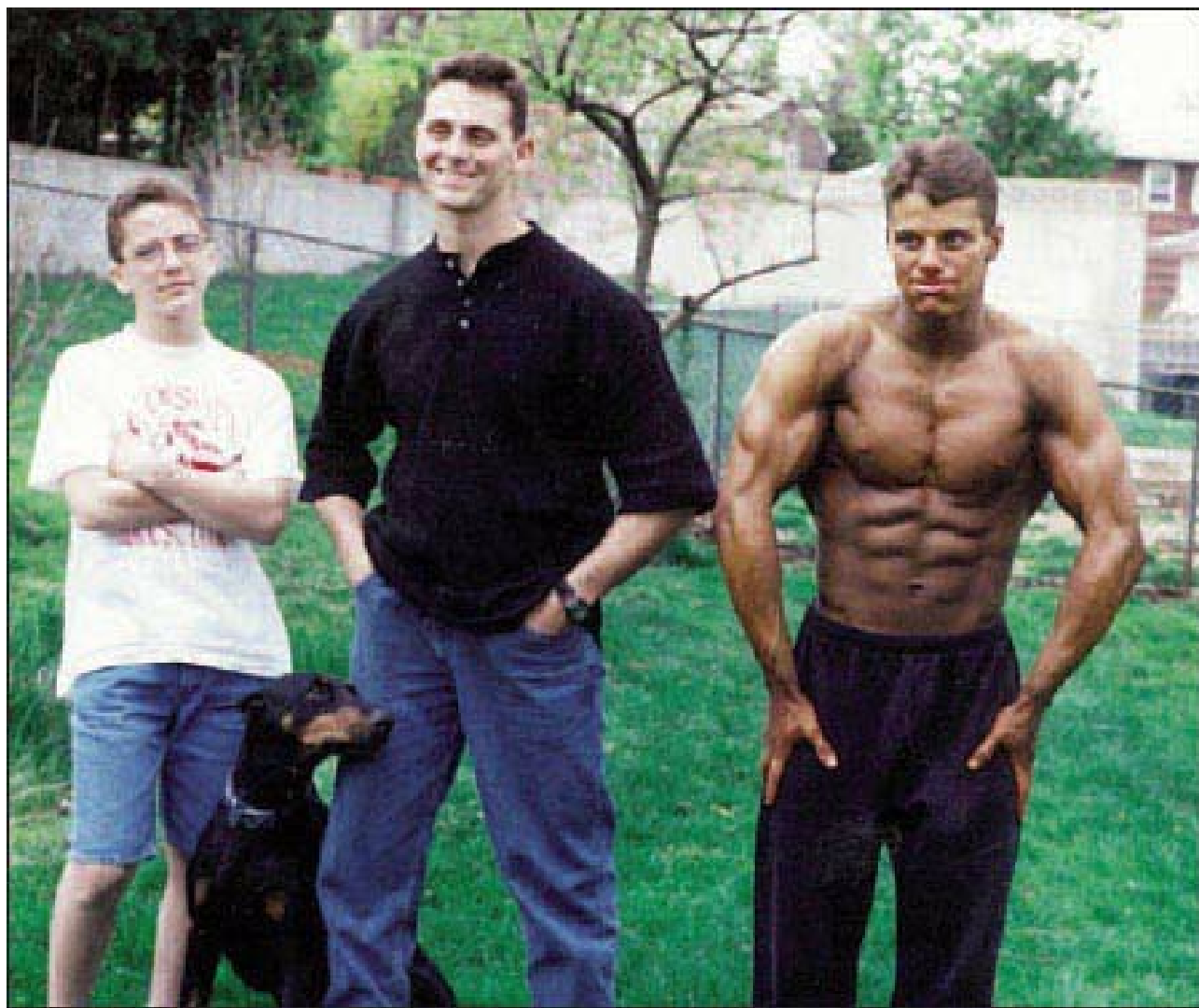
I would push the intensity during my workouts so intensely that my training partner would get nauseous, even during our shoulder workouts! He was throwing up during every leg workout, like clock work. I didn't care who dropped out. I was training like a man possessed, and all I wanted to do was to WIN.

For six months, we went after every workout with unrivaled passion and intensity. I was planning each and every meal like a mad scientist, writing down everything I ate, what time I ate, every set, rep, and weight used. I was bringing food with me to school, eating in my car in between classes if I had to. I was a full blown bodybuilder. I was living the lifestyle and I loved it.

As the Mr. New Jersey Bodybuilding contest got closer, people still didn't believe  that I was natural and it was starting to bother me. I heard the negative chatter, and I wanted to silence the naysayers once and for all. Lucky for me, a natural bodybuilding competition was scheduled a week before the Teenage New Jersey Contest. I felt that this was my opportunity to prove to everybody that I was 100% natural.

I entered the natural bodybuilding show and took the required lie detector test and passed. I wanted to bang heads with the best of them, so I signed up for both the teenage and men's novice division. It was an awesome experience, just as I expected. I expected nothing less than first place after training close to 6 months with my absolute best efforts on every level I could possibly attack.

I remember being back stage during this bodybuilding contest, it was called 'The Mid Atlantic Natural'. The competitors in the open men's division saw me pumping up back stage and they were saying, "Holy shit. That is one big boy. I can't believe that he's only a teenager."



I grinned and smiled, because deep down I knew that this was the result of all my hard work and my commitment to mind and body for YEARS, not just 6 months. I entered the light heavyweight class, which is for competitors weighing 176 pounds to 198 pounds. I only weighed 178 pounds — two pounds above the lightest cut off but you couldn't tell because of the muscle I packed on my frame.



I wound up taking 2nd place out of 11 men in the novice division. It was awesome, battling it out on stage against adult men and beating all but one. I was

the only teenager up there competing against men.

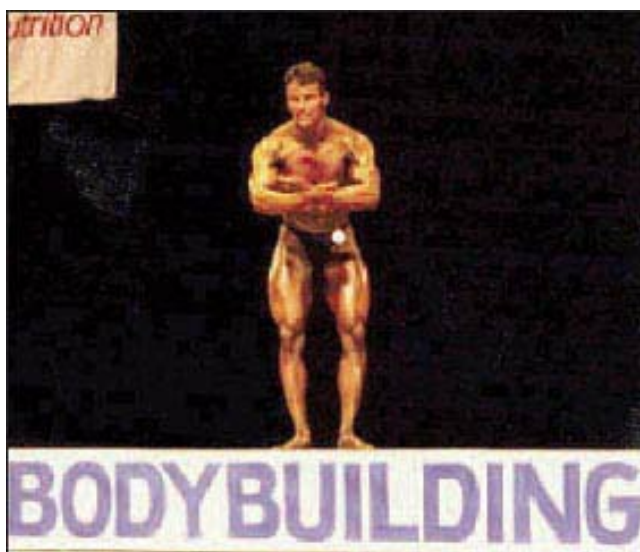
The very same night, I dominated the teen division. I was so much bigger, more muscular, and more ripped than my competition. It was an amazing feeling to go out and dominate the competition . I forced everyone else to compete for second place.

I felt as if I was ridding myself of some of the demons that haunted me after losing so often, facing depression, and struggling with wrestling.

The next week was the Teen Mr. New Jersey Bodybuilding Contest. I took 2nd place in the middleweight class and had no problem defeating the other competitors. Clear-cut 2nd place was not what I wanted.

I weighed in at 174 lbs, the top of the middle weight class. The guy who beat me ended up winning the Teenage Mr. New Jersey Overall, and then several weeks later, he won the National Teenage Bodybuilding Champion. He became the best teenage bodybuilder in the country, but I was pretty damn proud of myself for what I had done naturally when everyone else said I could not do it. I was proud of myself for sticking to my gut instinct.

More important than winning or losing, for me, was my ability to crush anyone who trained with me. I wanted to be able to out work everyone with my intensity, commitment and passion. It was rare that anyone could match my intensity. Stronger than me? Yes, it happened. More intensity than me? Not so often.



 *After the Mr. New Jersey contest, I continued training with the same training partners, three to four days a week. As time went on, our goals grew apart and my responsibilities were different than theirs, leading to a conflict of interest. Between my school work at college, my work schedule and their schedules we decided to part ways and train on our own.*

Once I began training on my own, I ditched the traditional training program my training

partners and I were following and I really began listening to my body, training accordingly and mastering exactly what worked best for me.

 Training as a natural bodybuilder is a different ball-game, and requires serious attention to recovery. I decided that I was going to create my own training program.

Instead of training two or three days in a row, I began training every other day  using a four-way body part split. I remembered always feeling a little run down when training 2 days in a row. The 2nd workout always felt like I had slightly less energy so I decided to train every other day instead of 2 days on and 1 day off.

I continued reading the bodybuilding magazines, but I felt myself losing touch with those magazines, as I found the fabricated articles were being repeated or rehashed every few years. I wasn't impressed by their physiques, and admired the bodybuilders of the 70s and prior to a much greater degree.

Although my bookshelves were bending with all the magazines from the 90s, the  books and the photos that truly inspired me the most were the black and white photos from Arnold's Encyclopedia of Modern BodyBuilding. Now that I was 19, more mature and more knowledgeable, I began to read and understand Arnold's book more carefully. The bodybuilders that trained in the Golden Era, the 60s, and even the 50s, were different from the bodybuilders of today.

The old school bodybuilders had a thick, rugged build that clearly sent the message of how strong they were. Not only did they look strong, they WERE strong. These guys didn't believe in just pumping and feeling the muscle. They were bench pressing with 300 and 400-plus pounds. They would squat —400 or 500 pounds and more. They did deadlifts on a regular basis, with some of them deadlifting 500, 600 pounds and even more.

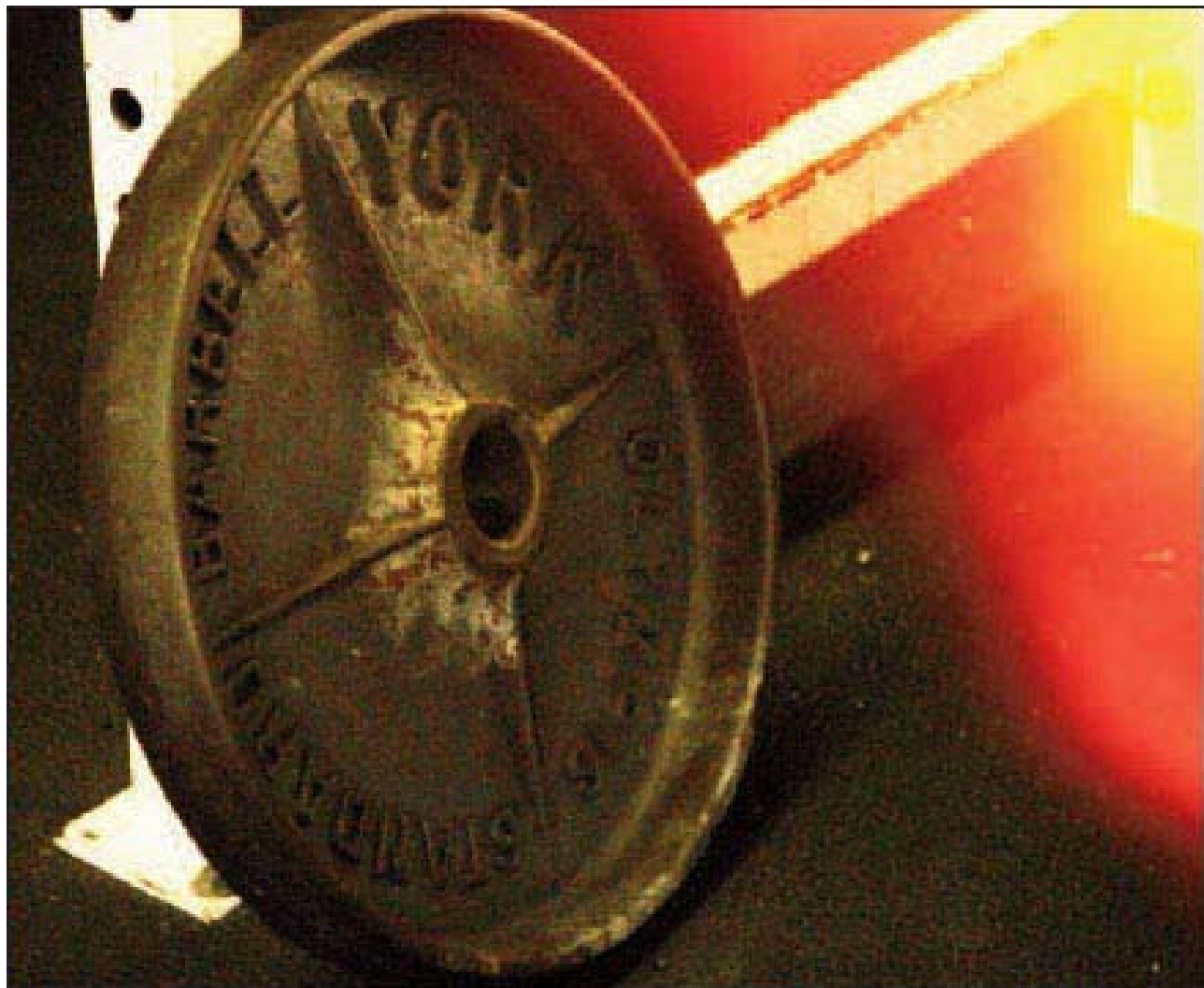
Tough Olympic lifting exercises such as the clean and press from the ground were  a regular part of the program for these Golden Era bodybuilders. I began training just like them, focusing on lifting heavy coupled with an aggressive pace each workout, along with plenty of rest in between training sessions and plenty of clean eating.

It worked like a charm. I started to gain more strength than ever before. My physique acquired the thick and rugged look that I always wanted, just like the Golden Era bodybuilders. I became focused on avoiding the training style of those who only wanted beach muscles. Becoming strong, not just looking strong, was the core of my training focus.



Ken Waller

I continued to train at Diamond Gym on my own. Oftentimes during my mid-day break from college, I would drive to Diamond Gym and bang out a mid-day workout alone. I would train with others who inspired me but more often than not I was on my own.



I ate tuna sandwiches in my car instead of buying the typical lunch that you find in a college cafeteria. Lucky for me, everything in Diamond Gym kept me focused while I trained solo. I was focused on the old school methods, as there were photos surrounding every inch of the gym wall. Many of them were old school bodybuilders and famous Diamond Gym bodybuilders.

In between my sets, I would look at bodybuilders' pictures for more inspiration. The bodybuilders who graced the walls of Diamond Gym were built like brick shit houses. All of them acquired that old school heavily muscled look, which was just what I wanted.

I always chatted with the guys at the front desk at the end of my workouts while chugging down a protein shake. They all had stories from the earlier days of Diamond Gym — stories of bodybuilders who possessed amazing levels of strength that would shock me and inspire me at the same time. I always thought to myself that I wanted to become one of those guys who was known for shocking others.

I heard stories of how one guy walked in the gym and without asking he jumped in on a leg workout and squatted 495 for a bunch of easy reps without a warm-up, in street clothes. He finished his set and walked away; nobody dared question him. That story reminded me of how Mike Vallely dominated the streets on his skateboard, jumping our BMX ramp without asking us!

I heard stories of bodybuilders dumbbell-benching the 180-lb dumbbells for reps. These were not just stories. Every week I saw plenty of guys with 315-lb bench presses and heavier, both on the flat AND in the incline bench. Squats with 405 lbs going ass to the grass were the norm. These guys were what I viewed as power bodybuilders, not the typical bodybuilders. I resonated with these guys the most.

They were heavy lifters. I admired their physiques, I admired their strength, and most of all admired their attitude. Everything I heard about these guys came back to that one common theme — they were all extremely strong.

As I focused on lifting heavier and getting my mind stronger, understanding what it would really take to develop myself into an old school bodybuilder, my lifting numbers went up.

It was now becoming commonplace for me to squat with 405 pounds ass to the grass, and oftentimes, 455 pounds for sets of five. I did Romanian deadlifts with 405 pounds at the end of my leg workouts when I was already fried, dumbbell benching with 130 dumbbells, barbell cheat curls with 155 - 185 pounds, weighted dips with over 100 lbs. I had a new respect for strength, and my respect increased for men who were built like brick shit houses. Most of all, I wanted to respect myself for my work ethic and strength.

This style of training took my weight from a plateau of around 202 lbs to a solid 210 pounds. I took all my magazines that were filled with pretty boy bodybuilder techniques and threw them away. When I threw them into the garbage cans, I felt like my soul was being cleansed.

I stared out the window the morning the garbage men came by to pick up the garbage. It took two guys to lift each garbage can and throw away those magazines. Aside from listening to my own body, the only literature that I looked at and learned from were the books and magazines with all the black and white photos from the Golden Era days.



WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD

"If you love life, don't waste time, for time is what life is made up of."

— Bruce Lee

My 4 1/2 years in college went extremely fast. After graduating college, I became a physical education teacher. I was now a working man with a full time job, a salary, and a new truck. How did time fly so quickly? Every day, after teaching—Monday through Friday—I would go home and follow a strict schedule. First, I would eat some tuna or have a meal replacement shake. If I was training that day I would head straight to the gym after eating to train. My day was planned around eating, working, and training.

7 AM Breakfast: 8 egg whites, 1 yolk, 1 bowl of oatmeal, large glass of orange juice, a small pitcher of water

10 AM: Protein shake mixed with water

1PM Lunch: A blend of protein (meat) and carbs (frequently potatoes)

4 PM After Work: Another protein shake or small meal after work. Usually a can of tuna.

5 PM: Hit the gym or connect with friends and hang out.

After training I ate my post-workout dinner with my family, and later that night, usually ate dinner leftovers and sometimes another protein shake.

My body was growing like a weed as I blended together quality nutrition, strong eating habits, hard training sessions, and optimal recovery. The results came quickly, not because I was simply training hard, but because I had dialed in ALL the important aspects of becoming stronger and bigger.

When people ask me why they aren't making progress, they are often missing some if not all of these factors:

Proper



Mindset



Hard
Training



Focused
on Basics



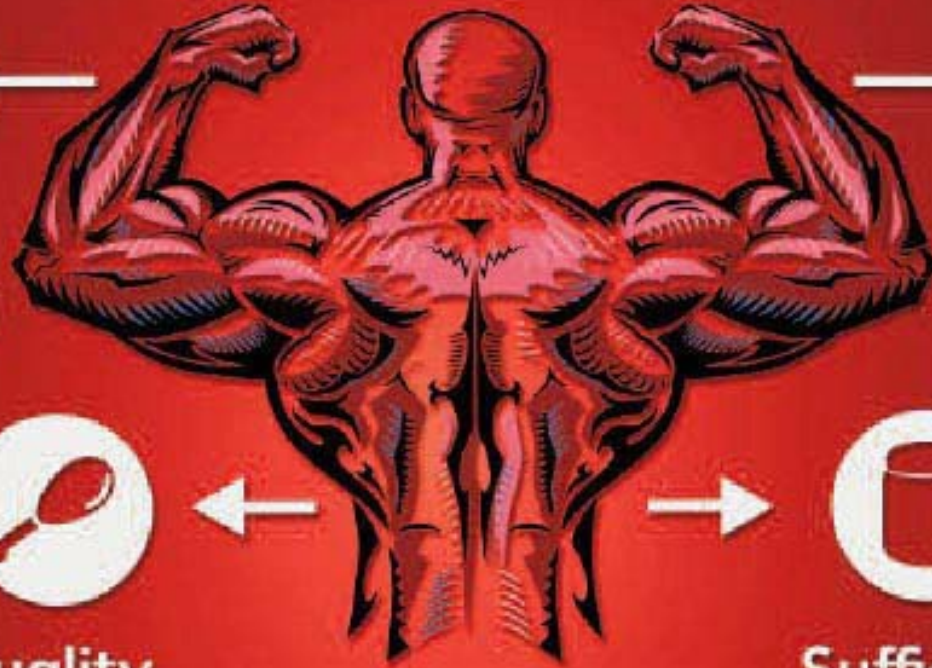
Quality
Nutrition



Sufficient
Nutrition



Optimal Recovery



I was 23 at the time, and after 10 years of training experience I was just beginning to feel like I was truly understanding what it took to maximize my strength and muscle gains. I've read many articles and books where they speak about the length of your training experience in relation to you being a beginner, intermediate or advanced lifter. After 10 years of intense training and competing I STILL felt like I was an intermediate at best because I was constantly learning.



Family support is crucial. My mom and brother understood and encouraged my eating schedule.

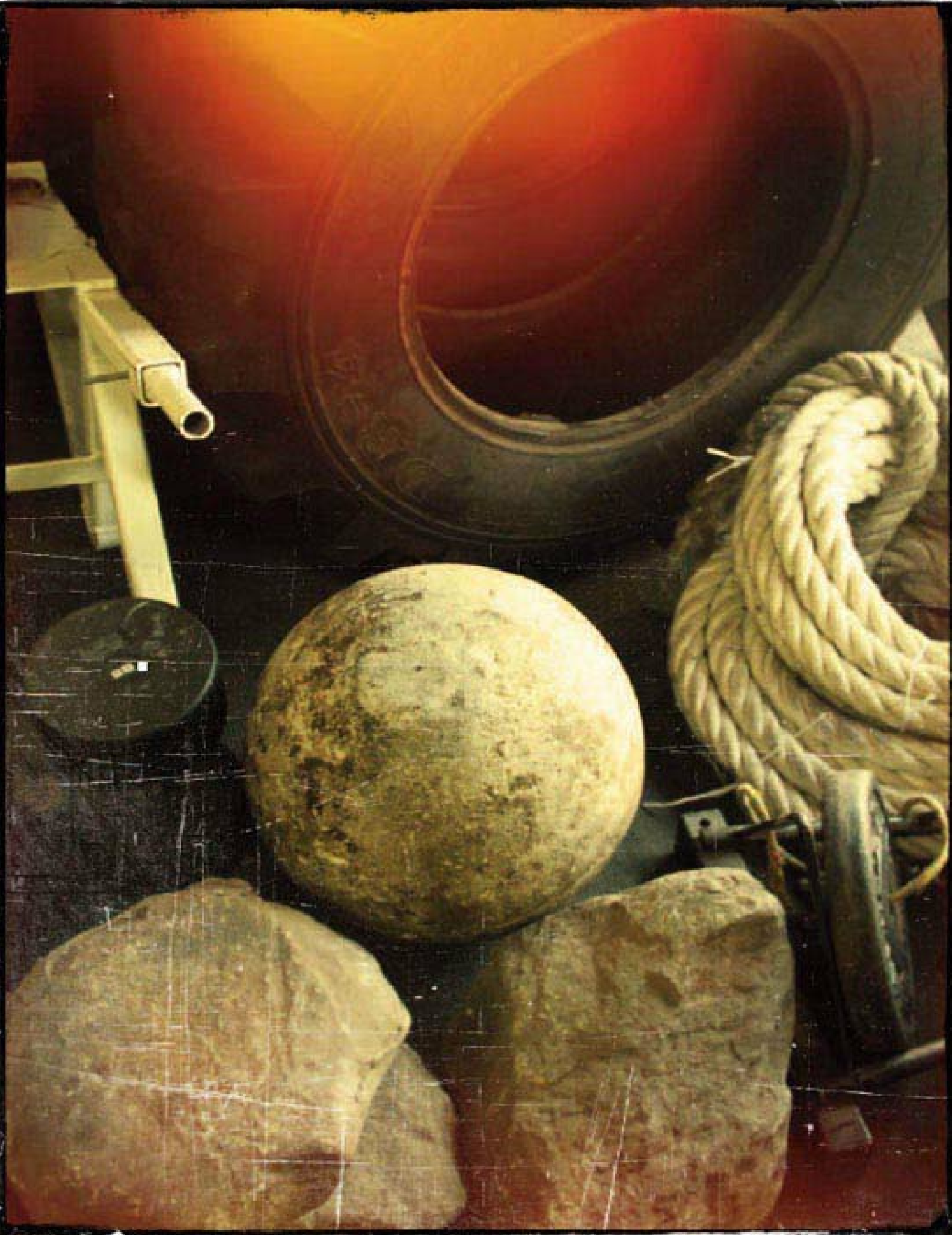
The best way to keep learning is to always see yourself as a student first. This places you in learning mode at all times. Your body will always be changing what it responds best to. If you're a Coach, listen to those you train as they too are in a constant state of evolution.

When you look at your own training program, understand that progress comes as quickly as you commit to ALL the important details, not just some of the details. Putting yourself on a committed training routine that looks the same day in and day out is what helps you remain committed. As you can see, I made amazing gains because I stuck to a rigid schedule of working, training, and eating.

Your day should be planned and controlled by you. If you allow the day to control you and determine when you train and when you eat (unless you are deployed in the Military), your results will be sporadic at best.

Regardless of your age, control your day and plan it out. If you're a high school athlete, don't blame mommy and daddy for not eating breakfast or having to buy the school lunch. Before you go to bed, make your lunch and put it in the fridge. No more buying the school lunch. For breakfast, wake up 15 minutes early and learn how to make scrambled eggs or have a protein shake ready to go.

Adults should pack and prepare food in the same fashion. For meals it is best to cook in quantity so your food can last for several meals rather than one meal. The less prepared you are the less likely you'll have high quality workouts, high quality eating habits and overall a high quality lifestyle.



SLAYING MY INNER DEMONS

In my early 20s, I was loving life as a working man and was passionate about everything I was doing. I focused on excelling as a teacher and lifting heavy. Teaching was my passion, and I was grateful to be in a position to be loving my work day in and day out. I would wake up excited to go to work, and my energy was through the roof while teaching. If you're passionate about what you do, the energy will be there!

I was only 22 years old when I began teaching. My first 4 years as a teacher was at the elementary school level for kids in grades 1 - 5. These kids had amazing energy and they worked hard and played hard. I spent the majority of my time outdoors as long as the weather wasn't in the freezing temps.

Life was simple and I enjoyed having it that way. No need to complicate things that make you happy, right? But as my first few years of teaching passed, something was missing and I wasn't sure what that something was. My gut instincts were talking to me.

During my 5th year of teaching, I transferred to teach at the middle school level to teach Health and coach Wrestling. I was making my life busier, working as an adjunct professor at the local community college and trying to contribute on a greater level to the kids in the schools.

Although I was climbing upward with my own education and teaching, I began feeling a void, as if I had still had something to prove to myself. I was no longer interested in competing as a bodybuilder. My passion was for training hard and heavy, not comparing myself to others in a bathing suit. Competitive bodybuilding didn't inspire or fulfill me on a deeper level any more. Deep down, I still had that fire in my gut to slay my inner demons from my past as an unsuccessful wrestler. I wanted to see what I could do with my new mindset and my somewhat better training methods.

As I grew older and matured a bit more, I began to have a greater grasp and understanding of the power of the mind. I started realizing that I no longer had a choice in this matter or my past would haunt me forever. I HAD to face my demons from long ago. Losing so often as a high school wrestler was something I couldn't let go of.

With my new style of training coupled with my positive attitude, I KNEW success could be mine. As my schedule got busier and busier from work coupled with attending graduate school, I started training at a local gym instead of Diamond Gym. The commute and traffic just couldn't fit into my schedule any longer.

It was a heart breaker when I stopped traveling to Diamond Gym, but my time availability had withered away with my hectic schedule. So much for the simple life!

The local gyms were horrible. I tried them all with hopes of finding an inspiring place to train. Every local gym had rules plastered all over the walls: No chalk allowed. No work boots allowed. Don't drop your weights. The music was horrific and literally sucked the energy out of me every time I walked into these gyms. Even the smell in the air was stale!

It seemed as if there was a vendetta against being strong and training aggressively. I kept trying to escape gyms that were crushing my passion and intensity. I would go to all of the local gyms in the area, often times traveling over 30 minutes each way on the weekends, hoping one gym would be at least somewhat hardcore.

None of them fit my expectations. They would play the radio instead of hard rock music. Every 5 minutes I had to listen to the torturous drone of commercials or energy-sapping music while trying to psyche myself up for intense training.

Other times I could barely hear the music because the front desk worker didn't care or understand the role that music played in training and inspiration. All the gossipers in the gym spoke louder than the radio, and it made me nuts. I hit a wall with my frustration and felt I had to do something about this. I decided that I would build my very own old school gym in the garage where I lived with my parents. We had an extremely small garage and the ceiling was very low, barely above 6 ft in height.

There would be NO standing overhead pressing or pull ups in this garage. The walls were cement, so the cold air would sit in the garage and make the temperature drop even colder than the outside temperature.

There was no heat in the garage, which I feared would eventually become a problem as I knew how cold the garage got in the winter time. I used to jump rope in the garage after my running workouts for wrestling in the dead of winter.

But I had watched Rocky IV so many times that I was inspired to make this happen and train in the cold like Rocky. I used the tough environment to motivate me and push me to become tougher rather than allow it to work against me.

I went out and bought a 300-pound weight set for 99 dollars. I was beyond excited when I picked up that weight set. I felt it was the start of something amazing, and it truly was.

I searched the newspaper classifieds and picked up some old dumbbells and a flat bench from a small gym that had just closed down. The dumbbells were a pair of 50s and 100s. There would be no screwing around with small or medium weights. It was heavy or not at all. I rounded off my list and picked up a very cheap squat stand. VERY cheap! From there I was set. Nothing but the basics. The basics always win.



The stereo from my bedroom became the garage gym stereo. I blasted loud music from my stereo. Every workout was intense. I wore two pairs of socks, two pairs of sweat pants, three sweatshirts, and a winter hat. It reminded me of bundling up for my long runs during wrestling season during those cold winter nights. When the air gets cold and winter starts to roll in I can literally smell wrestling season in the air. I imagine it's what a baseball player can smell when he walks near a baseball field and can smell fresh cut grass. It's a beautiful thing.

My garage workouts revolved around the basics, influenced by the Golden Era bodybuilders . I squatted, I benched, I deadlifted. I added hang cleans, but with no knowledge of the Olympic lift technique, these were actually "muscle cleans."

Those cleans were awesome for packing on muscle and full body strength. I remember Arnold talking about a primitive gym he trained at where no seated incline benches were available. He would have to power clean a bar from the ground and walk backwards, then slowly lean against a standing high incline bench for his incline presses. He said his back and shoulders packed on so much muscle from the heavy power cleans, which he normally didn't do.

Other movements I attacked were weighted dips, one arm rows, barbell rows, shrugs, heavy cheat curls with the barbell and dumbbells, and heavy dumbbell lunges. The only dumbbells I had were 50 and 100 pounders, so it actually pushed me to train heavy. My warm-up had to be a lot of high repetition calisthenics to get the blood flowing in the cold weather. Steam rose off my face during each workout in the freezing cold cold garage.

I thrived on training in my garage and couldn't wait for the next workout. I began feeling like a warrior training in the cold weather. Bundled up with my hat and my multiple layers of clothing, I felt I was training my mind AND my body, a far cry from years past. I was training three to four days a week in the garage.

As the garage got increasingly colder and late December passed, I decided I would buy a second space heater to try and heat myself up somewhat beyond the freezing temps. The one space heater just wasn't cutting it for heat. It was colder IN the garage than outside.

When I plugged in the second space heater and turned it on, the entire house shorted and I remember my Dad screaming my name from upstairs, "Zaaaaaach!!"

As soon as I shut off that second space heater to keep the rest of the house working, I said to myself, "so much for thinking I'll be warm." I continued to train in the freezing cold garage until I got a nasty cold that told me I should probably be training in temps above freezing if I wanted to stay healthy. I reluctantly decided to return to a "normal" gym for my training so I could get some heat, but this time around, I had a new outlook on training.

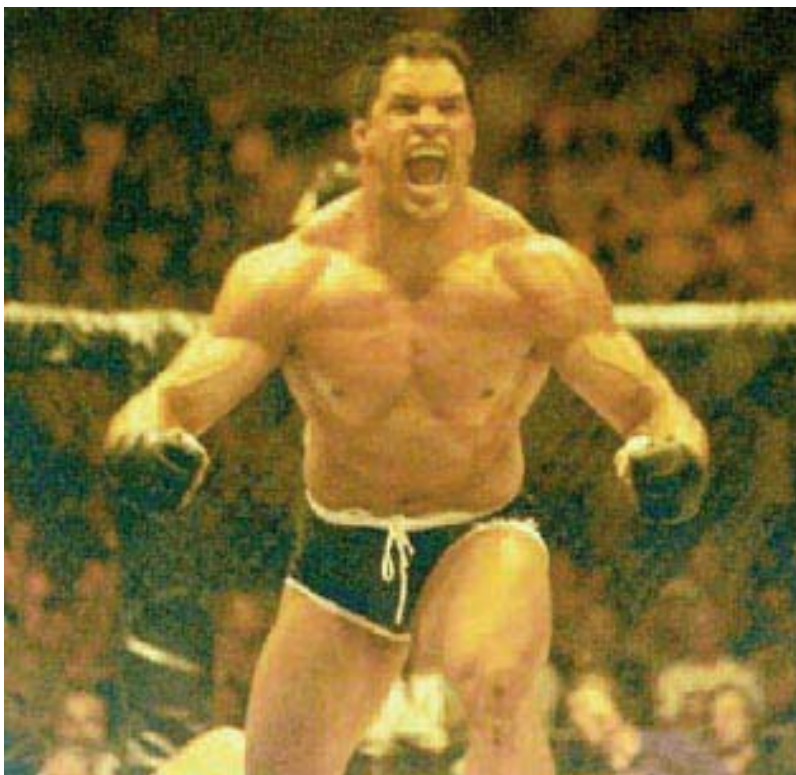
The results I got from training in the garage with minimal equipment and heavy weights encouraged me to focus on exactly that, the basics. I began performing full body workouts at the gym, using exercises like dumbbell farmer walks, dumbbell snatches, and clean and presses.

I attached my Walkman to my weight belt and went to town, blocking any outside distractions. For those of you youngsters, the walkman is what predates the iPod by at least 20 years. I didn't want to hear other people gossiping when I wanted to focus intensely on my training. I was there to train hard and become an animal, nothing less. My loud headphones blocked out the distractions of others chatting away.

My workouts were evolving more and more. I was getting strange looks from everyone in the gym and I loved it. Around this time, with my mind focused on training harder than ever before, I had taken greater notice of something that was popping up on TV on a regular basis called the UFC — The Ultimate Fighting Championship.

My high school wrestling coach introduced me to the UFC a few years earlier when he told me to go rent the VHS tapes with former wrestlers like Mark Coleman and Mark Kerr dominating. It was definitely interesting, but at the time I first saw these VHS tapes, I was focused on bodybuilding and this "no holds barred" fighting seemed like it was reserved for monsters and no one else.

After a few years, I had that bug inside of me to prove something to myself, and The UFC caught my attention this time around . The Gracie family popularized Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and there were only a few BJJ schools in NJ, less than a handful.



Former National Champ turned MMA Fighter, Mark Kerr.

Back in the day, The UFC was outlawed in many states, but NJ was not one of them. The guys that were regularly winning these events were typically former wrestlers, so I started to do research to see if there was something similar to the UFC in my area. I stumbled across a place that had a style of fighting called shoot fighting. They also taught BJJ and Muay Thai.

At the time, this style of fighting was called NHB or No Holds Barred fighting. It wasn't called Mixed Martial Arts yet and this was considered an underground – and even controversial – sport.

The training club I found was in a town called Elizabeth, not the best area in New Jersey, but I made the trek regardless and began training at this club several times a week in the evening.

It was a new and unique feeling to finally be confident in my physical abilities as well as my wrestling skills. I knew that confidence was a huge part of being successful thanks to my past mistakes, so I was determined to not allow the same mindset mistakes of the past hold me back.

I also felt that I had strength that most others couldn't match and as a middle school wrestling coach, I was still refining my wrestling skills on a daily basis by wrestling with the kids on the team. I was extremely confident in my wrestling abilities.

Two weeks after training at this shoot fighting club, I was doing pretty well and training with some of the higher level grapplers. I was encouraged to enter an up and coming national grappling tournament. I wanted to jump right into the competition, and by watching the wrestlers in the UFC succeed on a frequent basis, it convinced me that I could compete and win as a wrestler with limited grappling experience.

Most wrestlers were entering the beginner divisions, but I was told that as an experienced wrestler it was the wrong thing to do, so I went ahead and entered the intermediate division. During my first match, I was taking down my opponent at will and got caught in an ankle lock and panicked. Rather than slipping out, I tapped out and lost my first match due to my lack of experience and nerves.

This loss quickly taught me that it's not just about being strong or having big muscles. It was about learning technique to blend with my physical and mental strength. My lack of grappling experience threw me for a loop and even though my opponent didn't appear bigger or stronger than me, his higher skill level gave him the advantage.

I didn't let the loss put me into depression like I used to allow back in high school. I took stock in my mistakes and refocused my mind on winning my next match. The plus side was that I wasn't tired. I was strong and explosive and was excited to feel that I had

changed and adapted my training regime to meet the needs of combat sports.

My final match was a close call and a tough call. The crowd was all surrounding my match as I went head to head with a Judo black belt. My opponent immediately charged at me and tried to throw me. I locked around his body and reversed the throw to score the first takedown. It was an awesome feeling just to get the first point and have the advantage.

I took down my opponent several more times and he was never able to take me down once. He had almost submitted me multiple times with arm locks of various sorts but I refused to give up. Aside from wrestling and takedowns, all I knew was the moves I saw wrestlers use in the UFC such as the neck crank which didn't work too well during this match.

The match went into overtime, which shocked me because I thought I would win with all my takedowns against my opponent. In the end, I lost an extremely close match in overtime to the Judo fighter after only two weeks of training.

My coaches and my competitors were very impressed, but my lack of experience got the best of me. The ref told me my opponent had countless near submission attempts on me, which outscored my takedowns.

I was excited to be in competition mode and proud of myself for putting up a strong showing with no submission experience. I wanted to take things to the next level. More than anything else, I wanted to win again. I knew that if I could start winning again that I could remove the scars and demons that were haunting me from my high school wrestling days.

THE MOMENT THAT CHANGED MY LIFE FOREVER

My close losses from the grappling tournament fired me up more than ever. I decided that I would use the Dan Gable approach to training for success in grappling, so I began to train every day in excess by outworking my competition so I would never lose again. I set my sights on an upcoming grappling tournament that was a few short weeks away. I never wanted to lose again, and prepared myself for battle. I trained endlessly. When my friends were out on Friday nights, I went to the gym to work on my grappling.

Only two weeks after my first grappling tournament, during a Sunday morning training session, I injured myself in a way that would change my life forever. I tore my ACL.

I remember the injury and the workout I went through that day as if it happened two minutes ago. I arrived that morning an hour before our grappling practice was to begin to train on my own. I went off to the corner of the gym where weight training equipment was set up, and I attacked every weight and object in sight.

I kept thinking about Dan Gable talking about outworking my competition and how your body could handle 10 x more than you think it can. I was carrying the heavy bag, squatting the bag, and lunging with it across the mat to destroy my legs. I would exhaust myself on the heavy bag and then rest a short minute, move next on to sprints, calisthenics, dumbbell training, and shadow wrestling.

I punished my body and pushed myself to new intensity levels as I heard Dan Gable's voice in my head, as if I were his disciple. After an hour of training, it was time for class to begin. I was already exhausted and now it was time to push myself to the next level.

I began drilling and sparring with one of the MMA fighters. My legs felt like rubber from all the training I just did. The instant I began sparring I felt like I wasn't my normal self. In the back of my head, I heard that inner voice coming back telling me how tired I felt.

I tried to ignore the voice, shutting it out, pushing above and beyond. A few short minutes into our sparring, my opponent tried to heel trip me for a throw. His foot kicked my heel & I tore my ACL that instant! I fell to the ground like a sack of potatoes.

I thought I tore my hamstring, as I heard a loud snap when my ACL tore. I knew this was a serious injury by the sound of it. I just wasn't sure what it was.

I was so disappointed in myself. I felt embarrassment and confusion. My thoughts were running wild in the heat of the moment. I questioned myself as to how I could possibly get

hurt while being so strong. This wasn't the first time I'd gotten hurt while wrestling. Before this injury I had broken my nose, torn up my shoulder, strained my lower back countless times, and injured the same knee many times before, once requiring surgery.

This injury was the icing on the cake that would change my life path and journey forever. I was pissed off in the moment, completely confused as to how someone like me, who had been lifting weights for 13 years,, who was able to squat 455 lbs, deadlift 405 lbs with ease and, look so strong could get injured so frequently.

SPORTS SPECIFIC TRAINING & FARM BOY STRENGTH

W

hen I went to the doctor and found out my ACL was torn, I went home immediately and began researching on the internet for the best ways to train wrestlers and the meaning of the "sport-specific training" phrase I found myself coming across so frequently.

I studied everything I could get my hands and eyes on. Most of the recommended training was a far cry from what I was used to doing, but my training program was obviously broken, so I wanted to fix it. I decided to be my own guinea pig to test if this new style of training truly worked.

Due to work, I delayed the surgery on my knee, so I was walking around for 5 months with a torn ACL. Not good. When I finally underwent surgery in late June, I remember what ran through my head before going under anesthesia to get my ACL repaired. I said to myself that as soon as I got home, I was going on a hardcore mission to help wrestlers and combat athletes all around the world avoid all the painful mistakes that I had ever experienced.

It was the summer of 2003 at this time. I began to research popular buzz words on the computer. Those buzz words were "sports-specific training" and "functional training."

Everything that I came across showed guys training on one leg, standing on wobble boards, or standing on inflatable balls. It seemed so strange that these wimpy exercises would help transform average athletes into champions.



I went on eBay and bought a manual for a sports-specific wrestling training course. It was the biggest piece of garbage I had ever seen. The program had a guy training on old sand-filled weights doing preacher curls, bodyweight calf raises, and round back bent over rows. I realized I had just been tricked with fancy marketing.

The other functional training courses threw me for a loop as well. These movements were completely foreign to me. My background came from old school bodybuilding: heavy squatting, deadlifting, barbell rowing, weighted pull-ups, weighted dips, etc. I knew the basics got you strong, but wasn't sure why I was getting hurt so often.

The problem I had was not training hard, but training smart. I had pushed my body to a point in training where I overused movements that led to a weak, unstable and injury prone body.

I studied these new methods with an open mind. I saw experts stating that the correct way to train is by making sure you're always standing on one leg, twisting your body

around with rubber bands, medicine balls, standing on unstable surfaces, and other circus tricks. If every coach was touting this as the way, they must be right, right?

I felt like I was going to have to learn how to train all over again. I bought some of these specialty pieces of equipment off the Internet and put them in the garage. So now, alongside some dumbbells, a barbell, and a bench, I had wooden wobble boards and inflatable discs for wrestlers to stand on.

With my mission to help wrestlers become champions, I reached out to any wrestler or athlete I knew. It was time to become a real "personal trainer," I thought to myself. I had never heard of a strength coach.

I reached out to some of the local wrestlers I had coached in middle school who were now in high school, and also connected with a basketball player in my neighborhood. I began to train these athletes in my parent's garage for \$5 / hour. The basketball player lived up the street, and I traded him my training for an entire summer if he would borrow his Dad's pick up truck and help me transport equipment I had purchased from eBay.

Most of these workouts made me feel as if I wasn't fully on track or truly doing the right thing for these athletes. I remember telling myself how this standing on one leg stuff doesn't seem right. "This just doesn't feel like I'm doing the right thing," I said to myself, yet all the research I did showed me that this was THE way to train.

One lucky day, my attitude was changed. As they say, all things happen for a reason, and this was karma, no doubt about it. I heard an audio interview with a coach talking about why the wrestlers in Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania and farm type areas often dominate their competition. The reason, he explained, was because they all worked on farms and did manual labor.



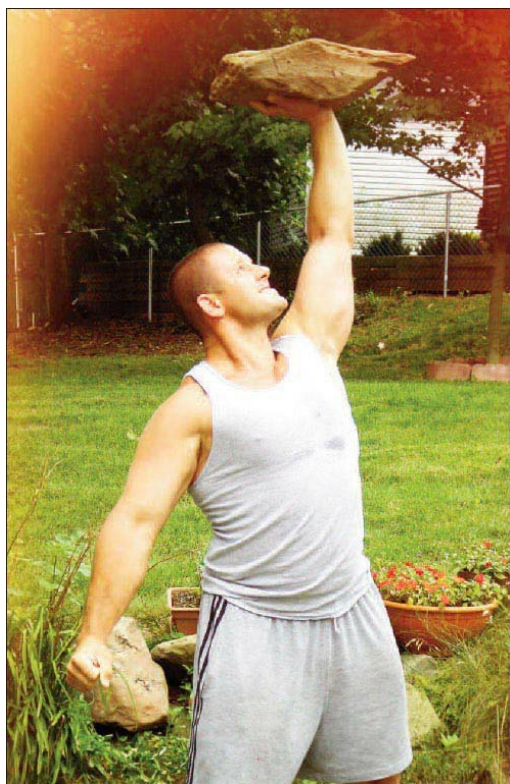
They chopped wood, threw bales of hay, carried heavy bags of feed for the animals, and pushed trucks and wheelbarrows around the farm. Rumor was that every farm boy wrestler had some type of a garage gym set up, and that all of them had a climbing rope and basic free weights. I became extremely intrigued by this "farm boy" strength that one could get from moving around odd objects.

I started focusing my training methods on helping wrestlers acquire "farm boy strength," and stopped all the "functional training" circus acts. In my parents' backyard, we had a massive line of stones lined up as part of the landscaping. The stones varied in shapes and size, weighing anywhere from 20 to 100 lbs, some of them even heavier.

I started to train the wrestlers with the stones. I would also have them use an axe on a large tree trunk that from a massive tree that was cut down in the backyard. I connected instantly with these farm boy workouts, and was fired up for these workouts. I went to Home Depot and threw a rope over a tree branch for the wrestlers to do pullups and

recline rows on.

I had them use the smaller stones for grip strength, and the larger stones for full body exercises and various carries.



After the heavy training in the backyard and the garage, I would ride my bike as a way to rehab my knee, and my athletes would jog along side of me as we went to various playgrounds in the area to finish off their workouts.

On the playgrounds, I would have them military press the picnic tables, use the monkey bars to do hand walking, pullups, dips, leg raises, and inverted situps. I would do sprints up the hills alongside them. I would make them wrestle for short bursts at the top of the hill after sprinting.

If the local playground had stones, we would place stones at the top of the hill as well. I would have them carry the stones up the hill and then perform squats or clean and presses with the stones. The workouts were brutal AND effective. I felt like I was Micky training Rocky!

This was my calling. I felt it running through my veins! This was my mission: To train these wrestlers outside the so called "rules" and turn them into Gladiators. My goal was to make them so confident through this style of training & so freakin' strong that anyone who dared step on the mat with them would feel the effects of training with Zach Even-Esh.

During this initial time of rediscovering myself and training other wrestlers, I was also dating a girl and things were getting serious. She saw what I was doing and thought I was crazy, spending all this time obsessing over sports training books, studying websites, and training athletes from a garage and backyard.

Our relationship grew and we got engaged the same summer I had my ACL surgery. It wasn't long after that we began looking for a house together. The only thing I cared about when looking for a house is whether or not it had a two-car garage. I didn't tell her this though. My plan was to be able to run a training business out of our house by night while teaching during the day.

Each passing day I learned more and more about training athletes. I would write down workouts in a notebook, test them out on myself and then on the athletes, tweaking them daily. I was a mad scientist for training wrestlers and loving it.

The wrestlers and the one basketball player that I trained from my parents' garage and backyard were experiencing amazing results. I knew I could get more done with these athletes if I had a 2- car garage to set up as a training compound for more serious athletes.

I envisioned myself training wrestlers from a garage every day and every night, 24-7. I remember seeing awesome garage gyms and backyard training compounds when I came across the early days of CrossFit and would chat with other guys training from their garage or backyard. I was inspired to create my own garage gym for myself and for wrestlers out of our 2-car garage.

If results were this good from a crammed 1-car garage, I knew a little more space would be the ticket. The basketball player I was training was now dunking the ball, which he had never done before. He was faster & stronger than his competition, and told me how he never felt tired during games. Compared to the rest of his teammates, he told me he felt like an animal. I loved hearing that type of feedback!

The wrestlers I trained began dominating their competition, oftentimes beating guys who had just beaten them only two weeks prior to training with me. Buzz was starting to spread through New Jersey, "If you are a wrestler who wants to dominate, then you need to train with 'that guy, Zach Even – Esh.'"



KETTLEBELLS FOR COMBAT

As I continued to research more of the training for combat athletes, kettlebell training was a word that kept popping up. Kettlebells were in their infancy at the time in the USA. They were extremely expensive, but everyone who wrote an article on combat athletes seemed to be talking about them. I was immediately drawn to them after seeing a photo of Mike Mahler pressing a pair of kettlebells overhead. Mike looked like he could run through a Mack truck and stop it dead in its tracks the way he was built.

The guys writing about using kettlebells for training combat athletes were more my style than the trainers who said we should be training on one leg and standing on wobble boards.

I started communicating with other coaches on forums about training combat athletes. There seemed to be two different schools of coaches. There were the coaches who would use big, fancy words and talk about the science behind training. Then, there was the other school of coaches, who spoke about training hard, heavy, getting results, kicking ass, and taking names.



I was more drawn to the coaches who spoke about results rather than trying to impress me with fancy science talk. There were those who were walking the talk and those who would simply talk the talk. I could tell who was legit and who was not.

I kept looking at the prices of kettlebells and always said to myself, "Holy crap they are expensive but I HAVE to have them if I'm gonna train wrestlers!" One of the kettlebell coaches from NJ took notice of my hunger, always asking questions and posting my workouts on the training forum. He saw my desire to use kettlebells with my wrestlers and for my own workouts. He told me if I ordered through him I could get a 10% discount. Even with the discount, the price crushed me, but I went for them anyway. When I want something, I go for it!

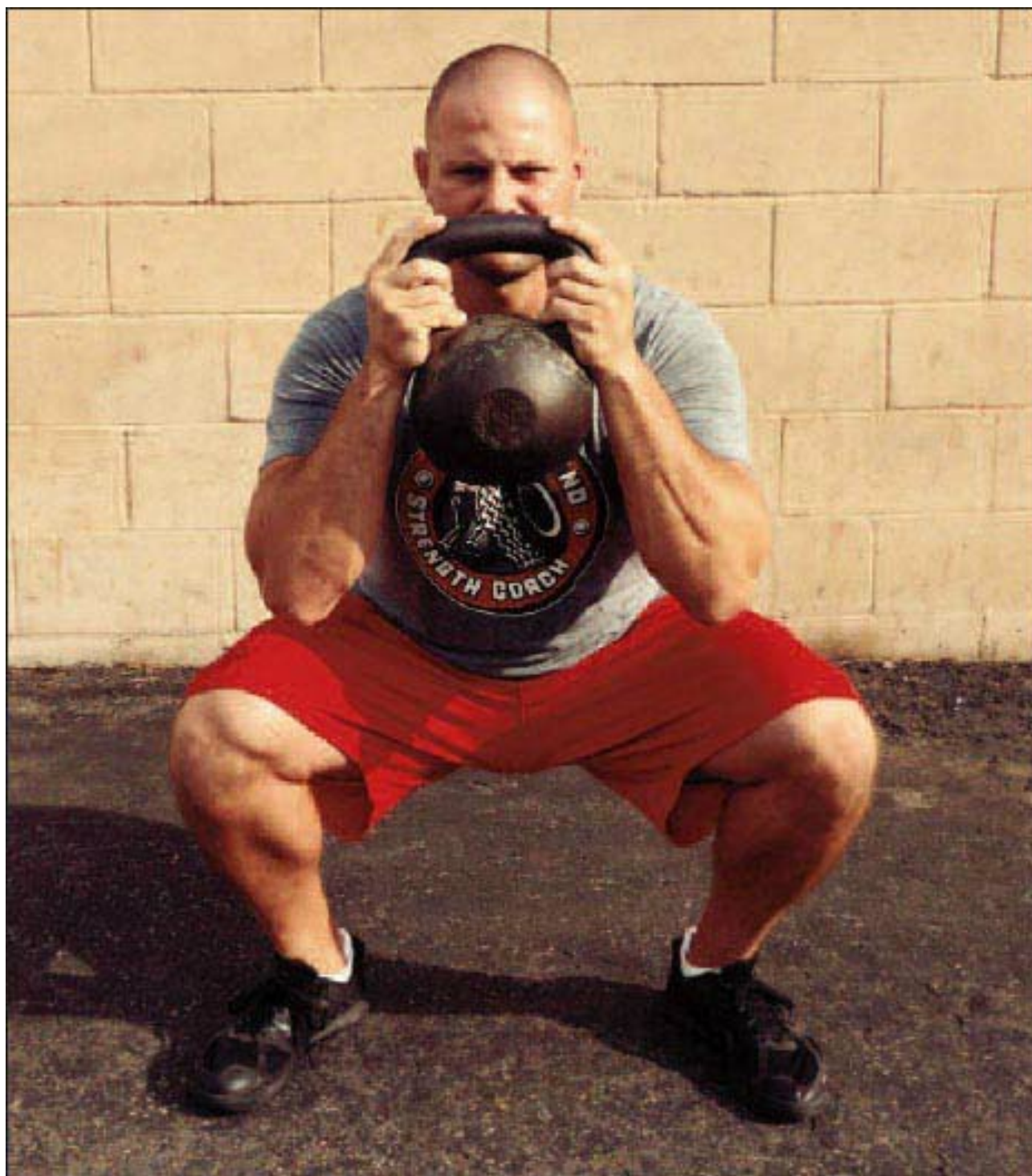


I came up with the money to get a pair of 53 and 70 pound kettlebells. It was \$550, a TON of money for me as I was in some heavy debt at the time. I remember being extremely nervous as I drove up to North Jersey to pick up these two pairs of kettlebells. I had purchased a kettlebell training DVD before I even picked up the kettlebells so I could learn how to use them before they were even in my hands.

I remember carrying the 53-pound kettlebells from the coach's porch to my truck. It was a freezing cold, winter night and the distance to carry the kettlebells was only a short 40 or 50 ft., but those 53-lb kettlebells felt like they weighed a ton! Those 53s felt so heavy in my hands that I remember saying to myself, "Holy crap! These things feel so freaking heavy. I can't believe I bought the 70 pound kettlebells. It's going to take me forever to be

strong enough to lift these 70 pounders!”

I drove the kettlebells back home and immediately brought them to the house my fiancé and I bought. The garage at the time was bare bones. The walls were cement and I had a bunch of old 45 and 25 lb York plates lined up against the wall. I brought the kettlebells into the garage and immediately began training with them in the cold garage using what I had learned from my Kettlebell Training DVD. I got my ass kicked and LOVED it!

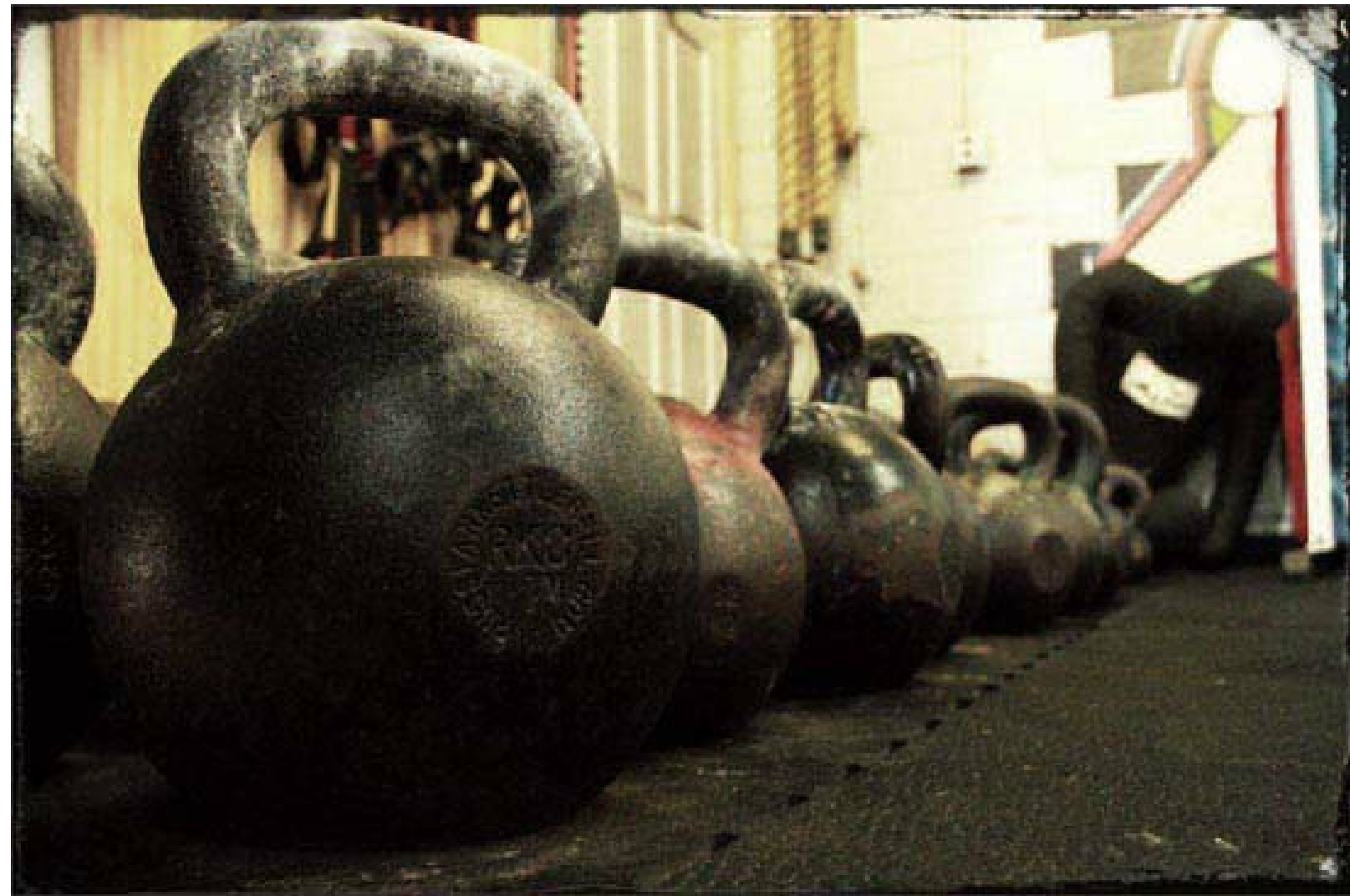


When I was done with my workout, I realized most of my athletes were not going to be strong enough to use the 53-lb kettlebells. The next dilemma was getting the money together for a lighter pair of kettlebells! Where there's a will there's a way! I made it

happen and using kettlebells became a regular part of our training program as well as my own workouts.

I had the wrestlers carrying kettlebells for long distances, and run up to the kettlebell from my driveway up to the corner of the street and back. Other times they would throw the kettlebells and run up the bell and repeat for extended periods of time. The first time they learned to do the snatch they all got their butts kicked. I saw how effective kettlebells were and how challenging they were.

I became intrigued with implementing them for all aspects of physical and mental development. And because we trained outdoors so often, I found ways to use the kettlebells that most others didn't dare think about.



We used the basic exercises but I would also load up our dragging sleds with the kettlebells, have the athletes drag the sled for distance, then grab the kettlebells and perform a circuit and repeat for time: drag the sled, attack the kettlebells, repeat! Other times I would tie a long rope through the kettlebells and perform hand over hand pulling combined with calisthenics. These training experiments using my creativity were the beginnings of my NO rules training philosophy.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

The more research I did, the more I began sharing these training methods on my web site and with other serious, like-minded strength & conditioning coaches. I became friends with coaches like Jim Windler, Louie Simmons, Jason Ferruggia, Joe DeFranco, and Coach Ethan Reeve. They were all amazing guys, and to this day we still chat on a regular basis. These men opened up my mind to training for results first and foremost. These coaches didn't get sucked into standing on one leg or on a stability ball. They were **IN** the trenches training other people using basic equipment yet producing powerful results.

I would email Coach Reeve frequently, and he would talk to me about his training methods for wrestlers and college football players dating back to his own workouts from the 70s and how they evolved to his current methods.

Jim Wendler would always talk to me about sticking with the basics of squatting, benching, deadlifting, sprinting, pullups, pushups, dips, and always having a plan.

Louie Simmons would get a call from me every week during my lunch breaks while teaching. I would ask Louie how he was training the MMA fighters and the wrestlers. He would shock me with his unconventional training methods — things like slamming medicine balls for five minutes non-stop, dragging a sled for 10 minutes nonstop, and the like. It was the first time I heard of training beyond sets and reps.

When Louie told me about his high school wrestlers benching over 200 pounds when they only weighed 110 pounds, I was floored. I saw how my wrestlers were far from those levels of strength and that we had so much potential for growth.



I realized that developing "special strengths" is one of the biggest answers to dominating your competition and the type of results Louie was getting were far beyond our results. I thought we were kicking ass and taking names and when Louie spoke to me it raised the bar that much more.

I began breaking the "rules of sports-specific training" and "functional training." The more rules I broke, the more results the athletes got. We had a cherry tree cut down in the backyard of my house, and I kept a 4 and 5-foot section of the tree. I would have the wrestlers carry the logs for distance or time. I also had the athletes power clean the log, squat, & lunge with the logs as well.

Carrying the tree log around was brutal work. I quickly learned why those farm boy wrestlers were so dominant. This style of training not only developed a unique type of strength, but also improved mental toughness.

I made sandbags with hardware store supplies. I took stones from my parents' backyard

and I even bought a couple of 12 and 16-lb sledgehammers. I bought a rope from Home Depot and slung it over a heavy tree branch for rope climbs, hanging about 16 feet from the ground. It took me a good 30 minutes to finally get that rope over the high tree branch, and I almost lost my eye throwing that rope and chain over the branch! I was determined to build my backyard into a Rocky-inspired training area.

At the local elementary school I would have the wrestlers push my truck across the empty parking lot, which was 150 - 200 ft long. This school field and parking lot had the perfect set up for our combat style circuits. We used the hills for sprints, performed kettlebell farmer walks up the grass hill and also carried the kettlebells up the the long flight of stairs located behind the school.

More and more, I became known as the "goto guy" for training wrestlers. The results were shocking to others, and I'll be honest, they were even shocking to me. These underground-trained wrestlers were dominating the competition and they were built like brick shithouses. They were everything I wished I was back in high school. I felt as if I found my true calling in life — to help wrestlers avoid all the painful mistakes I went through in my past.

During these workouts, I would often take photos and create articles for my cheaply made website. I was hoping these articles would spread to help other wrestlers and combat athletes around the world. I borrowed my parents' digital camera, which was literally the size and weight of a brick. Little by little, I accumulated photos of us training using the various training tools from my garage and backyard, and wrestlers around the world took notice.

I created a simple online training program based on my methods for training wrestlers. I called this e-book 'The Gladiator Training Manual,' and I put it together with a bootlegged PDF maker that I snagged from eBay. I was hungry to share what we were doing, and wanted to share it far beyond NJ. I wanted the world to know.

As soon as I released this small eBook, sales were coming in from around the world, sometimes from countries I had never even heard of before. I would sell anywhere from 1 - 3 eBooks a day. But there was that ONE day when I sold 5 in one day! The first time I sold 5 in one day I was ready to throw a party!

I loved having the ability to help others from all around the world and not being limited to NJ. I envisioned young wrestlers and their coaches from other countries reading my eBook and transforming themselves into champions, just as we were doing in NJ.



After I released my eBook, a larger audience took note of the training I was using with my wrestlers. I wrote an article for the largest strength & conditioning site in the world at that time. The site was run by former fitness coach, Ryan Lee. I learned a ton from Ryan with regard to getting the word out about

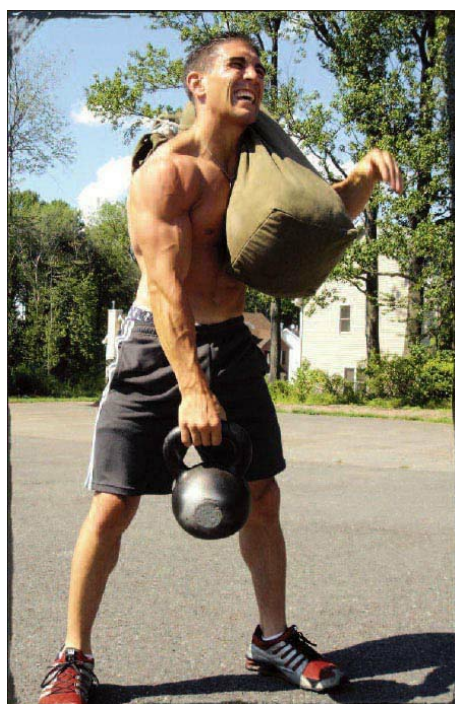
what I did with my wrestlers, and he helped me understand how to turn my mission into a reality of helping others all around the world. I was on a world wide mission, so laying low and keeping these methods a secret was not on the agenda. I felt like I wanted to save the world with these workouts.

Ryan Lee was impressed with what I was doing, and asked me if I would do an interview for his web site. During our interview, Ryan asked me to describe my training methods. At the time, there were all kinds of special names describing the various training programs you could use for training athletes. There was no name for what I did. I didn't follow the typical rules for training. I didn't follow a special bodybuilding split or a functional training routine, and I honestly felt like an outsider. To this day, I still feel like an outsider and like I don't fit in.

"We train heavy, aggressively, and we train a bit crazy, I guess this is called Underground Strength Training.

I don't really follow any rules. We're Underground"

— Zach Even-Esh



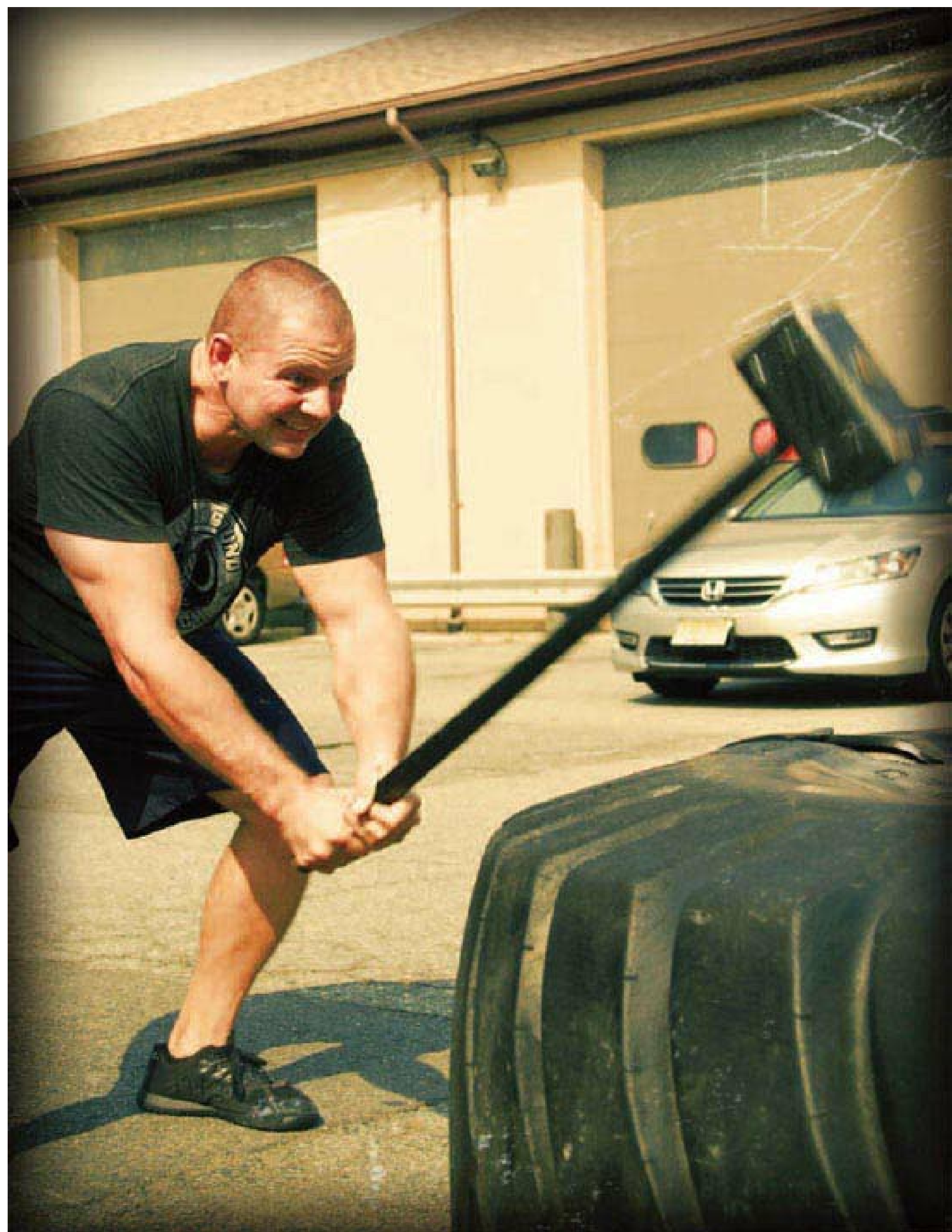
I answered Ryan's question in an awkward manner, unsure of what to say. "We train heavy, aggressively, and we train a bit crazy," I said, "I guess this is called Underground Strength Training. I don't really follow any rules. We're Underground"

Ryan began calling me the "Underground Strength Coach" from that point on. As word spread through town about what I was doing, I soon evolved from only training wrestlers to also training football players in the garage. I didn't even live in the house for the first year as it was getting renovated, but I trained athletes in the garage that entire time.

People thought I was crazy when they heard of a business being operated from the garage, and we didn't even live there yet. They thought my priorities were backwards. I realized that those who

thought I was backwards simply didn't understand what it feels like to live for a mission.

My own personal workouts also took place in my garage with a friend of mine. But during Spring, Summer, & Fall I barely trained in the garage. We would oftentimes pack a few sandbags and kettlebells with us in my truck and train at local playgrounds and school yards. We would drive around town and find the best playgrounds to train at. We looked for pullup bars, parallel bars, and open fields. We would literally beat the hell out of ourselves during these training sessions. It was exhilarating to train outdoors and escape the traditional gym environments.



THE EXPERTS

I was starting to attract attention in the strength & conditioning field from other coaches, as well as combat athletes. The attention from other coaches wasn't always positive. I remember the first time I heard about big name coaches complaining and making fun of me for training the way we did, and I got irritated by it. But I was so confident in what we did because of the results we got that I was willing to pit my training against anyone else's training. The only things that counted for me were the results I delivered for my athletes.

I KNEW that you could argue all day about science and how a workout looked on paper, but you could not argue with results. I wasn't concerned with fitting in, following the fads and gimmicks out there. Approval from other coaches was not something I cared about. As a teacher, you learn to put the kids first, and that always means running into resistance from others.

My athletes were getting so freakin' strong, so physically and mentally tough & so confident, that I felt like I was doing something truly worthy on this earth. My answer to the naysayers was for them to train wrestlers and pit them against the Underground Trained wrestlers. Rather than engage in the negativity against these insecure coaches I chose to do my talking through results.

Wrestlers were now traveling to my garage from as far as 45 minutes away. I told parents pull up in front of my house, wait for the garage door to open at the top of the hour, and then let their kid into the garage.

It was like a secret society or a fight club for these athletes, and they were proud to be part of it. They knew that they were part of something special, something that their friends were not a part of or too scared to do themselves.



We trained outdoors — even in the winter time. There would be snow on the ground and we'd be in the backyard carrying the logs, using the sledgehammers, and sprinting hills. I felt like this was real life Rocky IV. My mission to help wrestlers and young athletes was gaining momentum like a runaway freight train. Wrestlers who used to lose on a regular basis often found out about my training from my athletes' parents. Once these losing wrestlers began training with me, it wasn't long before they began dominating their competition and racking up victories.

My backyard was beginning to look like an underground military training camp. I remember my neighbor looking at us from her back deck and shouting that we were going to hurt our hearts. Trust me, I was a little nervous training in my backyard and at local playgrounds for one BIG reason. From what I was told, this was illegal, and I wasn't supposed to be training people from my garage or at the local parks and playgrounds. This

is exactly why I never went to the big parks where everyone would be roaming around and park rangers could harass me. Instead, I went to the run-down, beat-up playgrounds where nothing was going on aside from the grass growing too tall and local kids smoking cigarettes.



In my mind I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. My mission with wrestlers was keeping me motivated like nothing I'd ever felt before in my life. I would wake up thinking about training and fall asleep thinking about training.

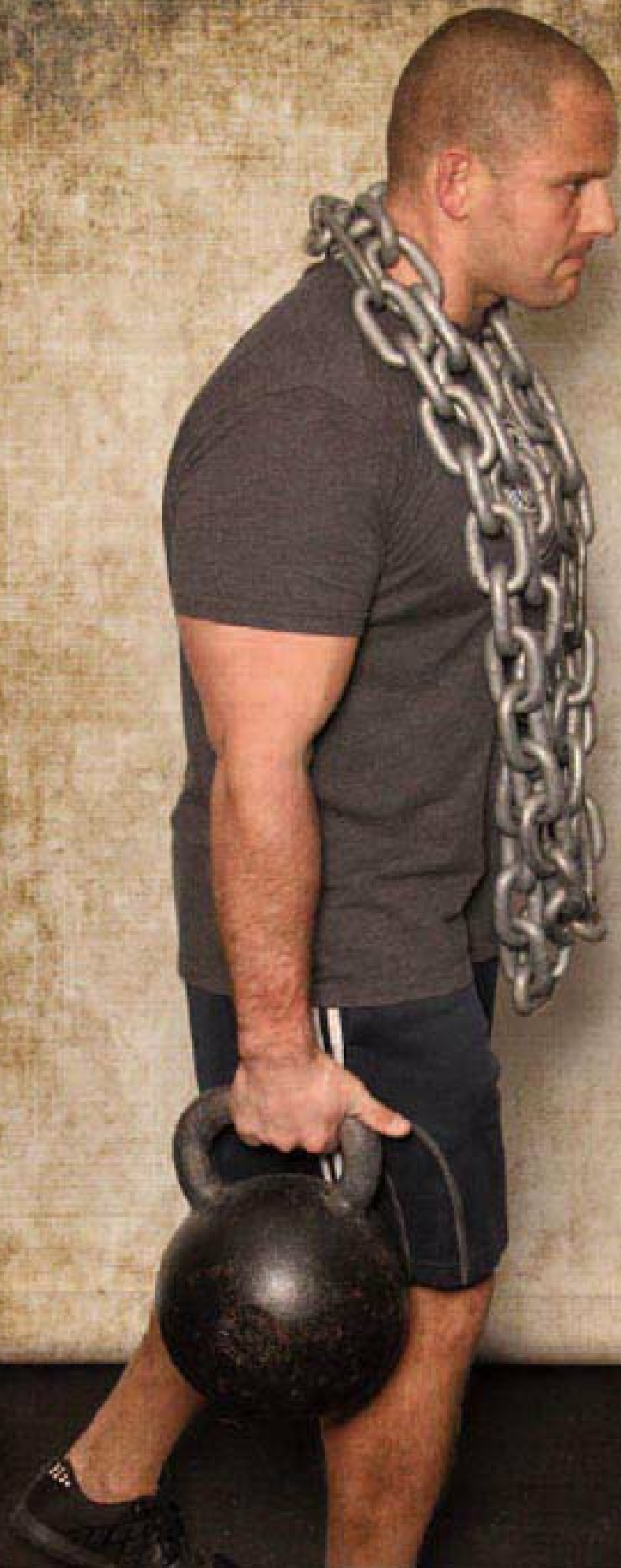
While training athletes at the local playgrounds, the people who were there stared at us in shock and awe. We were their entertainment. They watched us push trucks, press picnic tables, drag sleds, push prowlers, and carry all kinds of odd objects up the hills and around parking lots. We even wrestled on the grass.

Behind one of the schools was a very steep, long set of stairs. I remembered Dan Gable talking about the Shaolin Warrior Monks, and how they would do intense stair-training using plyometric jumps, buddy-carries, and hand walking up long flights of stairs. Coach Gable did the same thing with his wrestlers at Iowa and they became the most feared & most dominant college wrestling team in the country. I did the same things with my athletes up and down this long flights of stairs.



I noticed that this training not only improved their sports performance, but these young athletes also became stronger in other areas of their life. Confidence was higher for all these athletes, and their work ethic in school, their ability to cope with stress, and their respect for others were also improving. They were becoming everything I wished I was when I was younger. When I realized how successful these athletes were becoming, it was then that I realized that my hellish past happened for a reason. I realized that if I never endured such tough times in my youth, I wouldn't be on this life long mission to help as many people as possible develop an indomitable strength in mind, body, & spirit. Like Ryan said, I was put on this earth to help people become strong.





THE ENEMY OF PERFECTION

As the Internet became more and more popular for researching strength and conditioning methods, more and more coaches were able to share their information freely online. Whether they were right or wrong, it was freedom of speech to the 10th degree and things got more and more confusing as I came across countless opinions and methods.

Coaches that had big names on the Internet were saying that science had to back up everything we did. There was little discussion about results being the ultimate test. I let their words influence me too much, and I forgot that the **ONLY** thing that counts is getting results for the athletes I was training. I had seen many training programs that looked impressive on paper or in a book but would never truly work in the real world. They were designed by guys who were removed from getting their hands dirty as coaches, working with athletes day in and day out like I was.

The words from these coaches shook up my attitude and I felt that I had to utilize a more scientific approach to earn respect from these big name Internet coaches. I was convinced that I had to stick to all the rules of "optimal training" and "scientific muscle building."

Little did I know at the time, most of this big shot talk about science and the rules of training came from methods that were never tested in the real world with athletes. It was hype and nothing more. I became overloaded with information, overly concerned to use aggressive training methods and before I knew it, I was watering down my training programs.

That was a huge mistake and I'll never forget it. I look back at these days and always get angry with myself for denying my heart and what I knew these athletes truly needed.

 I started reading about the many different program design methods and studied them more aggressively than ever before. The more info I came across the more confusing everything got. There was conjugate training, Russian training methods, Eastern Bloc training methods, the Bulgarian system, block periodization, linear periodization, full-body only workouts, maximum effort, dynamic effort.... Which one was best? I had no clue anymore. I was sucked into the world of Internet information overload.

Luckily, I knew to stick with one thing that always works. The one thing I did **KNOW** was that the basics were always best for producing results. The only **REAL** way I could decide what worked or not was to see how our athletes performed come competition time.

After lots of experimentation and study, I finally decided to settle in on one style of training. I was getting so much flack about the "no-rules" style of training I was using that

I wanted to command some form of respect by doing the "right thing."

Let me tell you this. Do NOT worry about what others think of you. Earn respect by taking care of those you train. Results are what count, not other people's opinions. I hope my mistakes teach you valuable lessons.

Because I felt I could get a little more dialed-in with my training and the arm chair experts were confusing the heck out of me, I got caught up in the hype.

The program I settled on was simple, not easy. All of the workouts were full-body workouts and regimented. This full-body workout was called the Bondarchuk Complex. It was named after Anatoli Bondarchuk, the famous 1972 Olympic Gold Medalist in the hammer throw who became a world-renowned coach & educator for throwers.

This program required training three times a week, full-body workouts each time, and the recommendation was to follow the same workouts for four weeks in a row, progressing each week.

It was a systematic program, something that I had a tough time relating to, as I am more of a free spirit when it comes to training and the majority of my athletes are eccentric. I learned the hard way that trying to fit an eccentric athlete into a rigid routine is not the most effective way to train them, as they will crave change after the second and third week.

Here is how the program progressed through the 4 weeks of training:

The first week, you introduce the movements and establish baseline weights, along with refining or teaching techniques for a new exercise.

The second and third week, you try and break records using the same exercises. The workout remains the same with regard to the exercises. The goal is improve technique and strength, power, etc. Add some weight or add a rep or two; any form of progress is the key. Progress can also be measured with improved technique, not necessarily by adding weight to the bar or adding reps.

On the fourth week, you would de-load by going lighter and allowing the athletes to recover. The exercises remain the same. The program worked well, but I was getting bored coaching the same thing for four weeks in a row. The athletes thrived when they got stronger, which kept their attention, but the with the lack of variety, I can only imagine that the athletes would have felt better if had switched things up a little more.

Looking back, there were several mistakes I made by becoming too rigid:

First of all, I wasn't accounting for the day-to-day differences in stress or life events happening to the athletes I was training. I was concerned with sticking to the program and applying a program that was approved by others.

If my athletes had a stressful day at school or at home and it was week three, the program called for breaking records . Period. Certainly not the most effective way to train an athlete, especially when you have no control over their nutrition, life stressors, sleep habits, etc.

Knowing what I know now, when an individual is stressed out and emotionally fatigued, the last thing I look to do is break records in the squat or deadlift on that day. Working with athletes in the real world and understanding how to design a training program around their day to day stressors is much different than following a training program from a book that doesn't take into account these real world variables.

Training programs are meant to be tweaked. When you view the programs outlined in this course, keep that in mind and tweak accordingly.

On the plus side of this program, I stuck to the exercises that were proven to be effective for us. Sandbags, free weights, bodyweight exercises, and kettlebells were common when I organized each monthly workout.

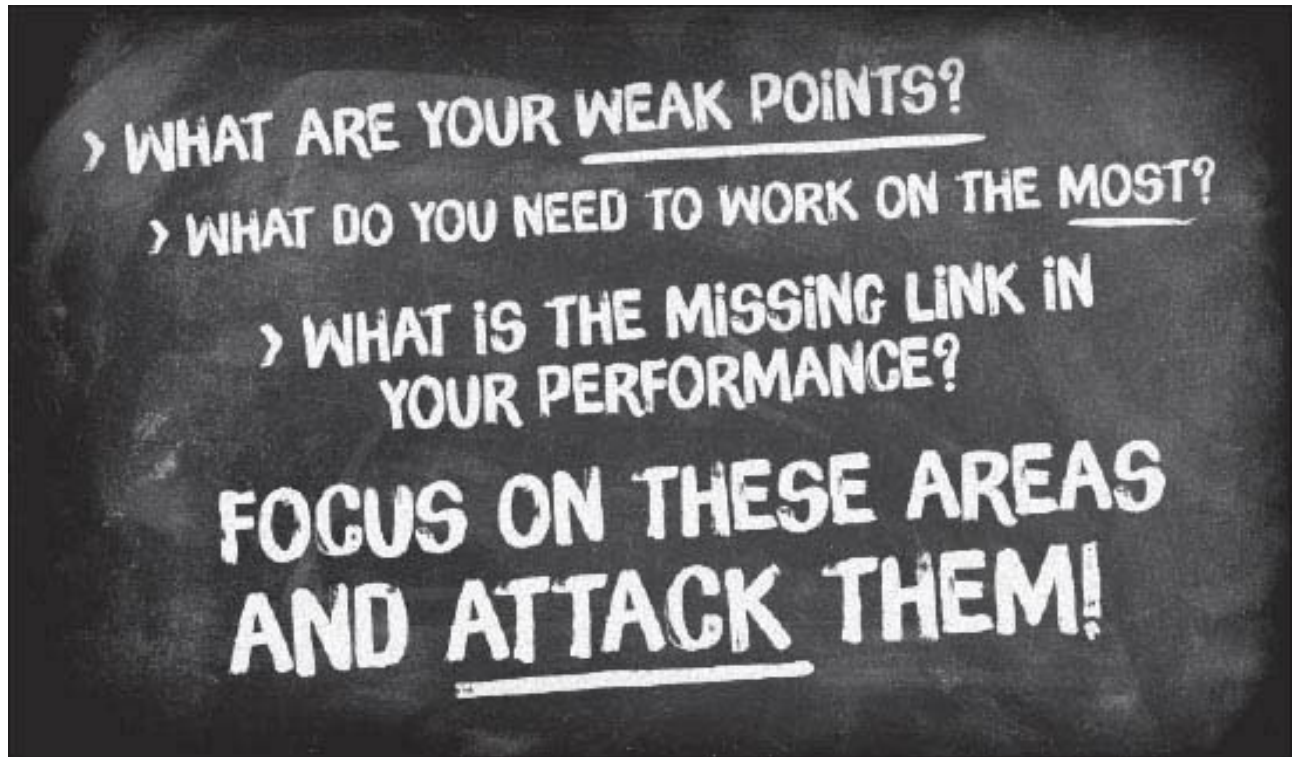
The workouts were solid, the athletes were getting stronger and adding muscle, but with all the focus on the perfect program, there wasn't as much of a focus on mental toughness as I had with my previous style of training. Mental toughness was and still is a BIG factor when it comes to improving the performance of athletes. I also realized that the full-body workouts didn't allow for as much recovery as an upper/lower body split. Our thinner athletes who needed to gain more lean muscle mass could have benefited from some extra volume in certain areas to increase muscle mass.

During this training time, I left out some very powerful training methods that I never should have ignored. We weren't sprinting up the hills or stairs like we often did before. We weren't going through mental toughness circuits — such as dragging sleds followed immediately by pushing my truck followed immediately by pull ups off the basketball rim. Those mental toughness circuits and workouts were brutal AND effective. I never should have left them behind. That slight edge was missing, and I questioned if I should continue to veer from the program and style of training I once used.

When I train individuals today, if I know an athlete needs more mental toughness, he's going to get a special finisher to push the mind and body to develop that mental toughness. If I know that strength is a weakness, then I will add extra farmer walks, heavy sled work,

and deadlifts. If I see a weakness, we attack that area until we make it a strong point. I'm not a fan of pigeonholing everyone into one program. I like having a guideline to follow with the flexibility to change for the benefit of each individual.

The end goal of this book is to empower you to become a better coach, for yourself or for others. What are your weak points? What do you need to work on the most? What is the missing link in your performance? Focus on these areas and attack them!



STRONG & USELESS

For my own training and the training of athletes, the development of strength is *STILL* my priority, but not at the expense of speed or athleticism. This means that you move heavy weights as fast as possible with proper techniques first and foremost. This is called speed strength, where you are able to move a heavy object with speed from start to finish. Overall health is also critical, which means incorporating plenty of mobility work on a daily basis. Kelly Starrett has been my biggest influence and mentor in this area, although I am always learning from others.

Back in the day, when I was a strength-only fanatic, I lost sight of the big picture, which was developing overall athleticism. I remember thinking that I could use the box squat, bench, and deadlift to fix everything. I would say to myself, "If you're too slow, if you're too weak, if you can't do the warm-up that we follow, I'll just get you stronger through the squat, bench, and deadlift and the rest will take care of itself."

The Big 3 are great lifts, but they are not the end-all be-all to solve problems. I see this same mistake being made today by many new coaches, and even by experienced coaches who refuse to see a way different than their current routine. They lose sight of the overall picture, and there is no balance in strength, stamina, speed, and mental toughness.

Through my mistakes, I realized that the bigger athletes were becoming what I call strong and useless athletes. For the skinny athletes, this strength focus proved to be effective, but for the bigger guys, not so much. The big guys needed athleticism.

The big guys proved to be strong when it came to lifting heavy objects for low reps; we had guys that could floor-press and bench press 315 for sets of 3 - 5 reps, trap bar deadlift 405 & 495 for 5 solid reps, and box squat with 315 and 405 for a solid 3 - 5 reps. Adding more strength to these big guys wasn't what they needed to become better athletes. They needed more than just a big foundation of strength.

When push came to shove and it was "Go Time," these big guys were unable to do some of the most basic movement portions and calisthenics from our Underground Strength warm-up.

Movements such as jumping rope, bear crawls, and crab walks left these big guys exhausted in less than 30 seconds. Bodyweight lunges were too difficult, yet they could squat 405? It was confusing the heck out of me when I first came across these issues.

I was ready to make a serious change with these big guys by getting back to my roots and blending some science with some No Rules, Underground Strength Training.

Because the main focus these big guys had was largely on getting stronger and stronger,

they lost out on developing the mental toughness that comes through the use of training them outside the confines of the gym and beyond the Big 3. It was time for these strong and useless athletes to start using odd objects and breaking the rules of what the gurus insisted were right or wrong. I saw the weakness and decided to attack those weak areas.

The traditional workouts these athletes followed from their high school weight rooms simply didn't push these athletes enough to go through grueling, competitive, gut-busting workouts.

When it was time to compete, they lacked durability of mind and body to handle intense competition and frequent sports practice. Many of them didn't impress their coaches when summer football practice began because they were gassing out or complaining about injuries.

I saw what happened when athletes were pushed into a program that only focused on lifting heavier weights. These kids were not powerlifters. They needed MORE, and this convinced me to return to what was tried and true for these kids.

One of the biggest changes to my workouts occurred after I came across a quote by Dan John, who simply said, "The warm-up IS the workout." Dan John was a high school strength coach at the time I learned about his long warm-up. It was just the thing I needed. I began incorporating a much more in-depth, athletic-based warm-up into our program in an effort to whip these big, strong athletes into fighting shape.

At the time of this change, my warm-up was quite short and only included some basic calisthenics and some simple movement prep; squats, lunges, pushups, some face pulls with a band, jogging a little bit, skipping, shuffling; nothing crazy, nothing fancy. We basically got right into the workout after two quick rounds of calisthenics.

**"The Warm-Up
IS
The Workout"**

— Dan John



As simple as that warm-up was, some of those big football players couldn't do

lunges during the warm-up without stumbling or getting stuck on one knee. The same guys who could bench 300 lbs had to do pushups with their hands elevated. I was NOT happy with this type of performance at all, and I got fired up! These big guys made me realize that what counts the most is the ability to move your own body, NOT the ability to move a heavy barbell.

I realized that how much you could squat, bench, or deadlift is not the end-all be-all factor determining your athletic performance. Squatting more than your competition doesn't necessarily make you a superior athlete. This new way of thinking didn't cause me to forget about the importance of strength; I simply realized there was much more to success than being strong.

I made changes as I removed a few things from workouts and added other things, testing them all to see what worked and what didn't. Some of the changes were as simple as going back and implementing methods that I never should have stopped using in the first place: more sled work, hill sprints, stair running, more bodyweight training, odd object circuits, and a greater focus on having high work capacity and mental toughness.

I let the overabundance of information on the Internet influence me more than feedback from my athletes, and it felt good to put my foot down and focus on using my gym as a lab where we tested right from wrong.

I added to our warm-up various running drills, one-arm kettlebell carries, variations of animal crawls, basic gymnastic drills on the grass, light kettlebell complexes, buddy carries, and jumping rope.

Our warm-up was now as Dan John intended it to be — a work out!



I stopped treating the big guys differently from the light guys and vice versa. I raised the standards for all athletes. Big guys had to get more explosive, athletic, and lean. Skinny guys had to get stronger, more explosive, and tougher.

When I implemented these small changes into the Underground warm-up, I felt like I was truly beginning to evolve towards my own system of training. I saw the success of my athletes rise above the norm. I decided that the best way to train my athletes would be to listen to my athletes and let results be my guide. That's what a good teacher does. He listens to his students, pushes them out of their comfort zone, and makes them better every day.

Not only did I feel I was becoming a better coach, I also felt like I was truly connecting with who I really was as a person. Reading too much on the Internet molded me into a clone of other coaches. I began connecting more with the coaches who were out there training people, day in and day out. These coaches were the same coaches who influenced me from day one and things went full circle again. Men like Coach Reeve, Louie Simmons,

and the like.

I tested the training methods on myself and my various training partners, then on my athletes. My personal workouts were always focused on going through some form of a battle to test and develop my mind like a warrior would. This was the beginning blending science with a little bit of hell. I understood the power of the mind, and never felt my mind was strong enough. My lack of mind power held me back, and I saw it held countless other athletes back as well. No matter how physically fit they were, it was their mind that ultimately determined their success. I was constantly pushing to achieve that next level with all the athletes I worked with, both physically and mentally.

I noticed many athletes were in the same boat as I once was. They had the physical tools to succeed, but they were missing the mental edge that would take them above and beyond their competition. A strong mindset had proven to be the key factor for success, and the missing link that causes some to fall short of their true potential.

Taking this into account, I didn't simply train athletes in the physical sense. I wanted to change them by training them for life, developing a mental toughness, a fortitude and a durability that they could carry with them through sport and then through their adult lives.

When the going gets tough, do you lay down and quit or do you rise above? I wanted to train my athletes to thrive when others would quit. I wanted them to get comfortable being uncomfortable. To teach them how to do this, I had to do the same. I had to live The Code. This pushed my workouts to the next level as well.



As simple as it sounds, our warm-ups became a critical factor in developing mental toughness. In fact, when we had new athletes going through a trial workout at The Underground Strength Gym, the warm-up was the true test of whether or not the athlete would be a good fit for the gym.

If the athlete complained and crumbled during the warm-up, I knew they had to improve their mental toughness, especially those big football guys who spent too much time focusing on benching and curling in the high school weight room and not enough time moving.

I started to make changes in the overall training program, beyond the warm-up. I decided that if you're a big, strong guy, there's less need for to focus on powerlifting and more need to work the kettlebells, the sledgehammer, sandbags, dragging the sleds, sprinting, and bodyweight training. If you were a football player, that meant that you had to prepare for a - 1 hour battle on the football field, not just a heavy set of squats and bench presses with five minutes of rest between sets.

I looked at the big picture and I saw that the biggest downfall for most athletes was lack of strength endurance, lack of power endurance, and lack of overall durability —durability

of mind and body.

I wanted to help these football players become well-prepared to attack aggressively and explosively for an entire game. I would switch things up to make training tougher for these athletes. Rather than dragging sleds at the end of a workout, I would sometimes start them with 10 minutes of hard sled work, then go into lunges or a single-leg exercise, and then squat heavy. They were used to lifting heavy when they were fresh. I trained them to be strong AFTER fatigue set in. This required more than just physical training; it required training mental strength, so they understood how capable they were above and beyond the norms. It was a big confidence booster for the athletes.



Rather than using traditional farmer walks, the athletes would drag sleds while also carrying kettlebells or holding a sandbag. This made the farmer walks twice as intense. Offset loading was another favorite (2 different weights while farmer walking) to prepare the body for the rigors and uncertainty of sports.

I wanted to help these athletes succeed in the real world, not just write about it in theory. I stopped giving a crap about what people were saying on the Internet about me, and stuck with my gut instincts. Results were the only thing that counted.

The atmosphere I created in the gym taught the kids to stop placing self-imposed limitations on what they could or couldn't do. I didn't care how big or small they were, and they stopped using their size or weight as an excuse. Every athlete was going to get trained to develop athleticism and toughness.

This meant building up a foundation of strength to have the ability to climb rope, perform handstand push-ups, pull ups, & various jumping & sprinting drills to exhibit power. It also meant being strong in exercises like the deadlift, squat, and military press.

If any athlete dared to say, "I'm too big for climbing rope," or, "Those lighter guys have it easy on the calisthenics," I replied, "Don't make excuses. If you can't do pullups or our other bodyweight exercises, you're too fat and/or you're too weak." I told them straight up the cold, hard truth. Training is supposed to be hard, and if they wanted to become a champion there was no room for excuses.

Being strong and useless was the enemy, and I was on a mission to put an end to the B.S. The underground warm-up became a right of passage for new athletes, and it was amazing how many athletes would quit during the warm-up all because it took them out of their comfort zone. This tipped me off big time to the fact that training athletes required a strong mental component if the physical results were to come to fruition.



The benefit of our warm-up system is that you will quickly notice how rapidly it improves athleticism, strength, and work capacity. The warm-up teaches you how to squat, lunge, and perform proper pushups, using full body tension & integrating the entire

body into all exercises, which is a technique you will use on all of the big lifts.

Our athletic warm-up began to set the tone for our requirement of always being in shape. As the athlete begins to go through the warm-up with greater ease, he quickly realizes that his strength and stamina have improved. This boosts confidence BIG time.

I make sure that that warm-up not only preps the body for an intense workout but also preps the mind for the training session. Once you can build yourself or others to go through the Underground Strength warm-up without experiencing fatigue, this is when you know that you are starting to make serious progress in your strength — both physically and mentally.

The more athletes I trained, the more my training evolved, and the more I allowed the training to become a blend of physical, mental, and even spiritual training for my athletes. The spirit comes into play when the body has had enough. When the mind has reached its limit, the spirit is what carries you through the toughest of times.

Remember, the goal of training is to improve performance and reduce injuries. The training must be challenging if you are expecting to experience any type of success. If you're satisfied with normal success and being average, then by all means, you can coast through your workouts. But if you want to dominate, then you must push yourself to go through the pain barrier on a regular basis.

If you've been stuck in a rut with the same ol' training program, you must find a way to make your workouts harder. As mentioned earlier, try squatting after your supplemental work rather than first in your workout. For upper body, I've performed 100 reps of mixed bodyweight pushing and pulling exercises, and then progressed to a heavy press variation. The body will adapt to training, and soon enough, progress will come to a halt. You must push beyond your former self to build yourself into a stronger athlete.

"Fatigue Makes Cowards Of Us All."

— Vince Lombardi



My motto for my athletes was simple, not easy: push yourself and get comfortable being uncomfortable.

This attitude encouraged the athletes to push their intensity levels up a notch on a regular basis, helping them develop that critical aspect of mental toughness. At the end of each workout I like to give athletes an opportunity to decide if they need (or want) to do extra credit work on their own or call it a day and focus on rest and recovery. You tend to find the same guys doing the extra credit work, and the same guys going home early. For some, going home early is the best answer. For others, I have learned that they thrive physically and mentally on doing extra training.

COACH REEVE & CHAMPION WORKOUTS

Coach Reeve and I often talked about how he trained himself as a wrestler through high school and college, as well as how he trained the athletes he coached since the 70s. Coach Reeve was always training on his own, even before he joined the wrestling team in high school. Without anyone pushing him or motivating him to train, he did the work on his own.

Coach Reeve began doing 500 pushups every day before he got into high school. The high school wrestling coach told him that doing "a lot of pushups" would make him a great wrestler and prepare him for high school wrestling.

His wrestling coach never said exactly how many pushups to do daily, so Coach Reeve assumed "a lot of push ups" meant 500 reps a day. Coach Reeve would do 250 reps in the morning and 250 reps in the evening. He did 500 push ups the very same day he won the state wrestling championships title as a high school junior, all completed after the weigh-in before his state finals match.

Today, as the head strength & conditioning coach at Wake Forest University, he utilizes the same athletic and toughness philosophy, allowing his athletes to finish their workouts with some energy in the tank. This leaves them with the energy and self-motivation to want to train on their own. The champion chooses to do the extra work on his own, whereas the normal, average athlete only trains when someone else tells him what, where, when, and how to train.

The confidence that comes with training like a champion through your own motivation is far beyond what the normal athlete will have. The champion knows he outworked his competition, giving him the added confidence to compete against others — not only thinking he will win, but instead, knowing he will win.

Coach Reeve greatly inspired my training methods, and has been a huge influence on how I approach my own training, as well as the training of others. At the forefront of our program, strength and the ability to use that strength is critical. The use of your strength is essentially the ability to exhibit overall athleticism. It is the opposite of being strong and useless. We want a blend of strength, stamina, speed, power, mental toughness, and overall health.

"The Key To Life Is Running & Reading"

Athleticism is the total package. This takes time to develop; strength is the foundation of athleticism. That strength is then molded and trained to develop the complete athlete. In a nutshell, you are agile, mobile, and hostile. Your mental training should regularly be blended in with your physical training. This balanced approach will push you to not only train heavy and aggressively, but to also train at a fast pace and explosive pace.

I no longer compete in sports, but I have focused my own training on athleticism. This keeps me healthy and makes me feel good about the fact that I can do more than just lift a heavy weight for low reps. The ability to run, jump, climb, crawl, lift heavy, AND feel healthy is a much better feeling compared to my days of only being strong coupled with the aches, pains, and inability to run or play with my kids and feel great about it.

Before I transitioned to training with a balanced approach, I caught myself making my own excuses for being unable to perform certain types of exercises and activities. Excuses such as telling myself I no longer needed to run distances beyond 1 mile without stopping were essentially a cop out for not being in overall, healthy, fit condition.

When you gain weight and focus on just being strong, running and bodyweight exercises are quite the challenge. I was always strong with calisthenics, but running was a challenge for me. Big guys begin to make excuses and come up with ways to avoid the exercises and activities that kick their asses. It's human nature.

I would use ridiculous excuses such as, "I'm a power athlete, I don't need to be able to run 1 mile." "I'm a strength athlete, I don't need to do conditioning workouts." When I lived with these limiting beliefs, I found myself exhausted after going out and playing with my kids or spending time outdoors. I felt unhealthy and disappointed in myself because I realized I was only good at lifting heavy weights for low reps. It wasn't making me a better person, nor was it challenging me. I was staying in my comfort zone.

To be better than average, you can't allow yourself to fall down that path. Do the exercises that make you uncomfortable, and do them often. You will soon become stronger at these weak points. In turn, you will feel like a million bucks when you can do what you once were unable to do.



Every athlete I trained, including myself, had to be "in shape." What did this mean? It meant we were all going to be able to run and run fast. None of this slow poke jogging that looks like a drunk man jogging with your feet dragging. Run fast, run hard!

If the warm-up is kicking your ass. then you're out of shape, period. Time to lose the fat

and get tougher. I built up the athletes' conditioning greatly with shorter distance sprint repeats, running 100 - 400 meters and repeating for several rounds, while maintaining the same levels of intensity each round. Little by little, the running distances increased, as did my athletes' fitness and mental toughness.

If you can't move your body at a fast pace for at least a few aggressive minutes in the form of running, how are you going to dominate on the football field when a game lasts close to an hour? A foundation of strength is critical, yes. But without fitness and durability, your strength will crumble under your fatigue.

Other conditioning methods include performing hard runs through the trails or on the beach, jumping rope, battling ropes, prowler and sled sprints, stair sprints, and swimming. These workouts help raise work capacity and overall recovery abilities.

The fitter you are, the easier it is to recover from regular, intense workouts. When you're out of shape, a hard workout will exhaust you for the rest of your day. When you're fit, you can train hard and still have the energy to perform at a high level for the rest of your day, whatever that activity may be.

These lessons were things I learned by testing them on myself, and through experience with my athletes. You cannot be afraid to test yourself in training. Don't question a training regimen until you have given it an honest go.

I use The Underground Strength Gym as a training lab, testing what did and didn't work. NO theories over here, all of these methods have to be tested. If it looks good on paper, that does not mean it works well in the real world. Sometimes the simplest looking programs are the programs that deliver the best results and offer the most challenges.



Our training faces a trial by fire when it's competition time. I get to see how everyone fares when they step up and compete, which I view as the ultimate test of our workouts. Learning how to train others from a book vs. real world experience really hits home when you have varsity high school athletes showing up at your gym that can't do one good pushup, can't squat more than halfway down without rounding their back and caving in their knees, and can't do one pullup.

The theory behind training with plyometrics, power cleans, box squats with chains, and the like takes a massive back seat when you see exactly how weak athletes are nowadays. Those workouts look great on paper, but the majority of athletes must go through some serious training to develop the coordination, the strength, and the experience in training they need before they can do a power clean properly.

I've trained large teams of high school athletes using bodyweight-only exercises, and over 90% can't perform one good bodyweight squat. With the pushups, it's usually around 80% unable to perform one solid rep. When I see their weight room program calls for

power cleans and back squats, I KNOW they are not ready for these lifts. This lack of preparation is prevalent not just at the high school level, but also at advanced levels such as the Division 1 College level.

I was fired up when I saw how weak athletes were, and realized that this is an unacceptable AND dangerous level of weakness. The weaker you are, the more likely you are to get hurt. If you are in a combat sport such as football, rugby, wrestling, or MMA, then you must prepare yourself best as you can to engage in battle. It sounds harsh and intense, but this is the nature of the sport.

I always tell athletes that if they don't know what to do or how to do it, they ALWAYS know to do pushups, pullups, and sprints. Those three things should be in an athlete's blood. Period. End of story!



But things are different nowadays. Parents are pushing kids to specialize in sports at the extremely young ages, neglecting the importance of physical development. I get phone calls every week from parents of six, seven, and eight-year-olds asking about speed and agility classes or sports-specific training. I always tell them to get their kids involved with gymnastics and to stay away from specializing too early. Early specialization hurts the athlete more than it helps, unless that sport requires an early introductory age such as figure skating and gymnastics.

I've come across video footage from the early 1970s and training manuals from the early 1900s, primarily from outside of the US, and ALL the athletes were being trained for overall athleticism, regardless of their sports.

You see footage of world-class athletes being trained in gymnastics, Olympic lifts, outdoor trail running, basic barbell lifts, kettlebell training, and playing in various sports to develop greater athleticism and fitness — not just engaging in the sport of specialty.

Wrestlers are shown swimming, playing water polo, basketball, and soccer. Olympic weightlifters are shown running through trails, cross country skiing, practicing gymnastics, and using Underground Strength methods such as training with tree logs, stones and other outdoor activities.

Overall athleticism is the ticket. Teenagers should be able to do pullups, squats, lunges, pushups, and basic gymnastic skills with ease. Being physically weak can lead to serious injuries during sports. Same goes for work-related issues. If your job requires you to be fit and strong and you're not prepared, it can mean the difference between life or death.



I always tell athletes that if you don't know how to do anything, you SHOULD know that as an athlete you need to be running and doing push ups, at LEAST! When you see athletes who can't do one squat, pushup or pullup, you quickly realize that Olympic lifting, plyometrics, and the like are nowhere near

anything you need to think about doing with them.

The more involved I get with athletes the more I realize the majority are far from ready to utilize advanced exercises and advanced techniques. It takes time to build them up properly, building a solid foundation of strength first and foremost. That means a steady diet of bodyweight exercises, sled work, and simple dumbbell exercises will be the way to go. More on training beginners later on!

In a way, being influenced not just by results but also by the older training methods was always a great reminder to stick to the basics, stick to what works, and not worry about how cool something looked. The eras of Physical Culture and the Golden Era didn't focus on fads and gimmicks. I'm sure they had their fair share of gimmicks, but not like today.

The strength athletes and bodybuilders of the Golden Era focused on using simple, effective basic movements that delivered powerful results. They didn't worry about how cool something looked or the theory of a training approach that came from someone who didn't train. Instead, they focused on results, which is exactly what I want you to focus on. When the 1980s came around, you saw many competitive bodybuilders competing in The World's Strongest Man Competition. You never see this today. Back in the late 70s and early 80s, those bodybuilders WERE strong. Don't just look strong, BE strong!

Don't allow yourself to get sidetracked by all the gimmicks and fads out there. You need to develop strength, muscle, and athleticism over the long haul. This is an ongoing process, not something that happens in a rush. It takes days, weeks, months, and years. The time adds up. This is not a summer workout or a pre-season training regime. Training must be done all year. Not only must you commit to putting in the time, but also fall in love the basics of lifting.

Here's a short list of basics that always deliver powerful results:

- ✓ Pushups
- ✓ Pullups
- ✓ Deadlifts
- ✓ Squats
- ✓ Lunges
- ✓ Sprints
- ✓ Farmer Walks
- ✓ Dumbbell Snatch

- ✓ Dumbbell Clean and Press
- ✓ Sandbag Carry
- ✓ Dumbbell or Kettlebell Farmer Walk
- ✓ Kettlebell Swings
- ✓ Sled Drags
- ✓ Car-Pushing
- ✓ Dips
- ✓ Military Press

The above list is basic, but these exercises, when attacked aggressively, will give you a physical and mental edge over those who are sitting on machines and training like pretty boy bodybuilders. The list above can be performed in a home gym or at a commercial gym. Strength is yours for the taking. Now go do something about it!



"YOU MUST SHOW NO MERCY... NOR HAVE ANY BELIEF"



GYM STRENGTH VS. SPORTS STRENGTH

I was at a summer wrestling tournament in high school when I saw two wrestlers warming up, preparing to wrestle against one another. The two wrestlers couldn't have been more different. One was built like a stocky pit bull, his lats were wide, his neck was thick, and his appearance was intimidating to say the least. He looked like he was a one man wrecking crew. His opponent was skinny and looked like he was weak all around.

Once the match began, I watched in shock as the skinny wrestler man handled the stocky wrestler. It wasn't even a challenge for him. The skinny wrestler dominated the entire match and exhausted the stocky wrestler and finally pinned him.

I was too young to understand how critical a high level of skill was in becoming successful in wrestling. I simply viewed this as a mismatch with a great wrestler and a not so great wrestler. I've seen this happen many more times and it certainly does have to do with sports skill, but on top of that, it has to do with the style of training.

There are lots of athletes who look strong, but not all of them have the horsepower to drive those muscles. That is the difference between being gym strong, which develops good beach muscles, and being strong for your sport.

You've likely seen that type of athlete yourself. He crushes everything in the weight room. He's stronger than everyone else, sometimes he jumps higher than everyone else, and he seems like he can train forever without slowing down — in the gym, that is.

Once he begins the sport, he doesn't have the specific conditioning or strength needed to succeed. His muscles are trained for the gym and not for the work or sports requirements.

I learned this lesson long ago, and this is something you need to take into account when looking at your own training regimen. Being an ass kicker in the gym doesn't mean you are automatically a high level competitor in sports. The opposite also holds true. An ass kicker in sports might get crushed by the simplest workouts. Finding a balance between the two is crucial. Whatever your weakness is, attack it. If you focus on your strengths only, you will not achieve your full potential.

Always remember this critical rule: being an advanced athlete doesn't necessarily make you an advanced lifter and vice versa. The proper balance between sports skill and strength is what ultimately helps you achieve your full potential.

To get to the higher levels of your sport, your sports skills will be of the most importance.

This memory always gives me goose bumps when I tell others about it: I clearly

remember the two times in high school when I attended the John Smith Intensive Wrestling Camp during summer vacation. John Smith was a two-time gold medalist wrestler in the Olympics and a multiple-time world champion in wrestling. In a nutshell, the dude was a complete badass and we ALL feared him, even though he was only 140-something pounds.

He would kick the crap out of every wrestler in the room, including the wrestlers who weighed 200-plus pounds. He was much faster than all of us, literally to the point where we knew what he was going to do and still couldn't stop him. His strength felt like he had the grips of a monster and his explosiveness was unstoppable. Even in the Olympics, his competition knew what he was going to do yet no one was fast enough, skilled enough or strong enough to stop him. He never got tired when he wrestled and his intensity was second to none.

His performance was so amazing I assumed his training methods would also be on an elite level. Things didn't make sense until I learned more about the connection between high level skill in sports and high level skill in the weight room.

One night, we hit the college weight room for a workout run by John. We trained 3 - 4 sessions a day, and the final session of the night would alternate with wrestling one night, followed by weight room and mat conditioning the next night.

I was shocked at what I saw John doing in the weight room. Shocked!! Here he was, a 2-time Olympic Champion who looked like he never set foot in the weight room. John set us up with a circuit in the weight room and while we trained, John jumped in with us. The exercises he was performing were things like cable crossovers with horrendous technique, triceps pushdowns while squirming and hunching over the bar, and all other kinds of other bodybuilding training methods coupled with what I viewed as "wild technique."

Heck, even my crappy training back in my high school looked better than his training regimen. My technique was flawless. No body sway, no wild movements, slow and controlled technique from start to finish. That's the way I understood training. John understood the complete opposite. The one thing he understood was to attack and destroy everything that dared stand in his way, be it a wrestler, exercise machine, dumbbell, etc. His attitude was exactly what one needed to achieve the pinnacle of success!

John's wild training techniques in the weight room did not matter because his wrestling skills, wrestling training, and overall attitude were the most critical factors that contributed to his success. This example of John Smith is where attitude and a extremely high level skill are at such a point of superiority that it literally cancels out the other training that isn't good, let alone optimal.

John Smith was in that weight room to attack any machine or exercise. Technique didn't matter; his mindset is what mattered. He was like a pit bull in that weight room. He was using the Universal machine and attacking every exercise one could do on that 1970s

dinosaur of a machine!

Attitude. That's what John Smith had. An undying desire to attack and dominate anything that dared stand in his way, be it an opponent on the mat or an exercise in the weight room. He attacked. It's a life lesson I'll never forget. It's a character trait I wish I had when I was younger.

John Smith was one tough son of a gun & his wrestling skills were at such a high level that they didn't require a dialed in training program outside of his wrestling workouts.

How hard did John train in his wrestling skills? We were lucky enough to witness a training session of John's one morning, when we all walked in for our first practice of the morning. John was in there earlier than all of us, beating the crap out of two wrestlers in a way I had never witnessed before. I remember the looks on everyone else's faces as we witnessed John smashing his training partners.

We all watched him practice his technique, drilling with 2 training partners. His intensity was so high I thought he was live wrestling. After the practice, I realized John was drilling. John told us that when we drill it should look like we're live wrestling, and if it doesn't, we're not working hard enough. I get goosebumps when I think about his training intensity that morning.

He was literally destroying his two training partners to the point where they could barely get into their wrestling stances. Both of his training partners were sucking wind just trying to keep up with him, and they were both All American D1 Wrestlers. That's right. He had two training partners and probably could have used another one to two guys; that's how intensely he was practicing.

His drilling practice looked like a man possessed. You could see it in his eyes and his performance that he took every step of that workout extremely seriously, as if his life depended on it.

Coach Smith told us over and over again that our drilling should look like live wrestling if we truly wanted to get the maximum results from our practices. He wore shorts and a t-shirt. He emphasized to us that our wrestling practice is exactly that — a time to improve our wrestling, NOT a time to cut weight and wear three pairs of sweat pants.



His training advice always rings true with me not just for wrestling training, but for training in general. I would rather see you attack one workout with maximum passion and intensity rather than holding back so you can come back and train again later in the day for a second session.

Sports practices can develop the mind and body more than many understand. Wrestling and combat sports especially, are like lifting weights, except instead of barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, etc, you are moving the weight of another person.

Coach Smith impacted me greatly with how his wrestling practice served as his strength, speed, stamina, and mental toughness training all blended into one. Pushing, pulling, jumping, lifting — not in the gym, but on the mat.

I always tell the athletes I train to utilize this lesson from John Smith for their own sports practice. When you train as John Smith did, you don't need to add excessive work on top of your sports practice.



When a wrestler tells me he goes running every day AND attends extra wrestling training at a wrestling club during the in season, it tells me that he is NOT achieving what he SHOULD be achieving during his high school practice. It tells me he is NOT working his ass off during practice. If he was, there would be little to no energy — or even the desire — to train for a 2nd and 3rd workout almost daily. Six days a week of 2 1/2 hour practices leads to approximately 15 hrs of training. To attend another 2 hours of each practice several times a week plus running for distance another several times a week amounts to well over 20 hrs of training.

More is not better. Better is better. This means training optimally, training smarter, and training better than your competition. More training does not guarantee success. Having more skills, more strength, more speed, power, toughness, etc — the more advantages you have over your competition, the better your chances are of winning.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, I've seen athletes puts the majority of their focus into the strength & conditioning aspect yet not enough effort into improving their sport skills.

This dilemma creates a "gym strong" athlete, but not an athlete who can perform successfully at the higher and more competitive levels in their sport(s). At the mediocre levels of competition where skill isn't a big factor, this love for more strength and conditioning will serve you well. But, to get to the higher levels of competition AND be successful at these levels, sports skill has to be given the priority coupled with attacking weak areas in physical performance.



WHEN TO TRAIN HARD, HARDER, & HARD ENOUGH

How do you know when to train hard and when to back off? How do you know when it's all systems go to push your body to the brink and then some? There are many factors that determine how hard you can train.

- ✓ Nutrition
- ✓ Rest / Sleep
- ✓ Life Stress
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Training Experience
- ✓ Fitness Level / Work Capacity

The list of things that can help you or hinder your ability to train hard can continue going on and on. You can train as hard as you want, but if you're training with reckless abandon and paying little attention to your nutrition, recovery, and stress levels, you're going to get hurt and the results will not come.

There is a time in training when you can afford to kick your own ass and barely walk out of the gym, and there is a time to be smarter and focus on optimal training, leaving energy in the tank when your workout finishes.

The time of year is of critical importance. The timing of their sports season will determine the training intensity for athletes. The time of year will also determine what kind of focus the workouts should have.

If it is right after a sports season, then I know you will have to rebuild some of the muscle that was lost through high levels of sports activity, lower calories, higher stress, and less time spent in strength training.

Post season is not the best time to jump into heavy squats, heavy deadlifts, heavy power cleans, and the like. Unfortunately, I see and hear about athletes being tested with their 1 rep max in these movements year round, month after month, with no account for how much stress this places on the body and mind. One rep max testing should be reserved for an advanced lifter or powerlifter, as this is specific to their sport.

New trainees who don't have the coordination, let alone the experience, should not be moving such heavy weights with a 1 rep max. These 1 rep max tests lead to poor technique, which leads to injury and crap results — assuming you get any results at all. I've seen this countless times when a high school coach has an entire team follow one cookie cutter program without considering if these athletes are prepared for that specific training program. Does the athlete understand proper technique and overall safety? Is this athlete mentally prepared for this type of training? These are important factors to take into account. If common sense is not implemented into a training program the athletes ends up getting hurt. Nothing fires me up more than this lack of caring and attention to detail.

You can easily test progress week by week, month by month, year by year simply by tracking workout progress. A 1 rep max is NOT the only way to test strength gains. In addition to tracking the weights lifted, strength gains can also measured by seeing improvements in technique, signifying greater control over a weight. The ability to move the same weight faster is also a sign of strength gains.

The bottom line is that you must learn to think for yourself. Do NOT blindly copy someone else's program or something you find from a book or Internet article without determining if each exercise and the overall program will truly help you achieve your goals. That rule goes for THIS book as well. Weigh the pros and cons according to what YOU need or what the athletes you train will need. Become a leader and a critical thinker, NOT a follower. There is no heart behind blindly following others. Take the time to truly think.

The goal of training is to improve performance and reduce injuries for the specific sport /lifestyle/job requirements. If I see an exercise or program is not beneficial for the athlete, then I immediately change things.

In-season workouts are not the time to perform high-volume and high-intensity strength and conditioning workouts, yet many coaches make this mistake. I've trained shot putters who would run three miles with the rest of the track team. Regardless of their specialty, they all ran for distance.

Wrestlers are running for 30 minutes at a clip in season with little regard fore the fact that long, slow distance running will de-train them for the specific type of conditioning they need.

Mistakes in training, as you can see, occur mostly from a lack of thinking and an old school mentality of not wanting to learn a new, possibly better, method.

Here is a common sense approach for an annual training plan for a single sport athlete:

PRE SEASON (3 MONTHS BEFORE SEASON BEGINS):

Two and three months out, push training intensity high and focus on general specific

training methods. One month out gradually begin reducing volume and the week before the season begins implement a one week de-load.

IN SEASON (3 MONTHS):

Focus on auto-regulation to determine how intense each workout should be. Reduce volume to ensure maximum recovery via optimal training. Increase recovery methods and educate the athlete to empower him in using these recovery methods. Deload before a major competition during the season. Oftentimes there are two major events during the season. Watch the calendar carefully to plan accordingly.

POST SEASON (3 MONTHS AFTER SEASON ENDS):

Give athletes a week off after the season ends; sometimes it is best to make this mandatory to ensure the mind and body are given adequate rest after the stressors of the season. Stray from spinal loading the first 3 - 4 weeks post season and use moderate weights and reps to help recuperate the lost muscle mass and strength that happen during the season. After that first month, the athlete should be ready to resume intense training and the focus is to come after assessing what needs to be improved for next season!

OFF SEASON (MID - YEAR):

Truly, there is no "off season" This means there is no time off from training. Physical preparation is a year round commitment. But this time of year is oftentimes the safest time of year to experiment with training. It also allows you to push the envelope with intensity. Some sports, however, have an intense off-season competition circuit so this will depend on your sport. If you have competition-free period of time in your sport, this is a great time to focus on developing greater mental toughness, experiment with some high volume training and on the flip side, take some time to really focus on having fun with your training.

Training is supposed to be fun, never a chore, regardless of the time of year. When you have the time to be more flexible with your training, take advantage of that time. Here in NJ, the summer is when some athletes engage in surfing, swimming, mountain biking, and also their traditional lifting so they can have fun and shake up their training.

I have found that those who are still active in play and don't live in the gym are those who are most athletic and also tend to make greater gains as the play type activities reduce overall stress and help the athlete recover better, ultimately becoming stronger, faster and better conditioned.

A final note on training variations during different times of the year:

Bodybuilding tends to get a bad rap. I am against the bodybuilding methods using machines, pumping, and squeezing — in essence, the stuff I did when I was younger. I am

NOT against using bodybuilding sets and reps to help pack on muscle. Often this is exactly what you need to improve performance: more muscle. Beginners and intermediates especially will need to add muscle mass to help increase strength and performance.

The four weeks after a sports season or after a long, intense training cycle is often a great time to focus a little bit more on some bodybuilding set and rep patterns vs. attacking very heavy loads in the squat, bench, and deadlift. I've used this method often and noticed that once you put muscle back on and even add more muscle, the strength gains come as an added side effect.

We're ALL Different

When determining the intensity of the training I'll also look at the personality of the athlete. Different personalities require different tweaks in the training. Understanding the personality of an individual will help me determine what style of workout best suits their needs.

As I mentioned earlier, I've noticed that most individuals fall into one of three categories. These are not set in stone but they are common and will help you understand your own needs and the needs of others if you are a Coach:

THE WARRIOR

Some athletes thrive on high intensity workouts. This athlete will often stay after and perform extra training on his own. In between sets you'll find him doing extra ab work, pushups, and pullups. This individual doesn't like resting between sets and pushes the pace well beyond the norm.

Emotionally, The Warrior never feels satisfied unless he pushes each workout to the maximum and walks away from a training session feeling like he went through a battle. Leaving energy in the tank is not something he enjoys. All or nothing is more his style. This individual is often naturally mentally tough, and is skilled at handling pain and even thriving in the pain zone where others would normally give up.

THE THINKER

Other athletes thrive on sub-maximal type workouts, always leaving some energy in the tank with each set and each workout. This athlete feels satisfied with training hard, enjoys leaving the gym without wobbly legs, and enjoys having the extra energy to apply to other things such as sports practice and life in general. He doesn't want to walk around with aches and pains, and feels this is the smartest way to train.

The Thinker isn't always in the present; he looks ahead and thinks about how this workout will make him feel tomorrow or how it will help or hurt his performance down the road. The Thinker is the athlete who fits into the mold of optimal training. Sometimes this individual will stay after for extra training, but for the most part he works hard when it's time to train and then leaves it behind.

THE CONSERVATIONIST

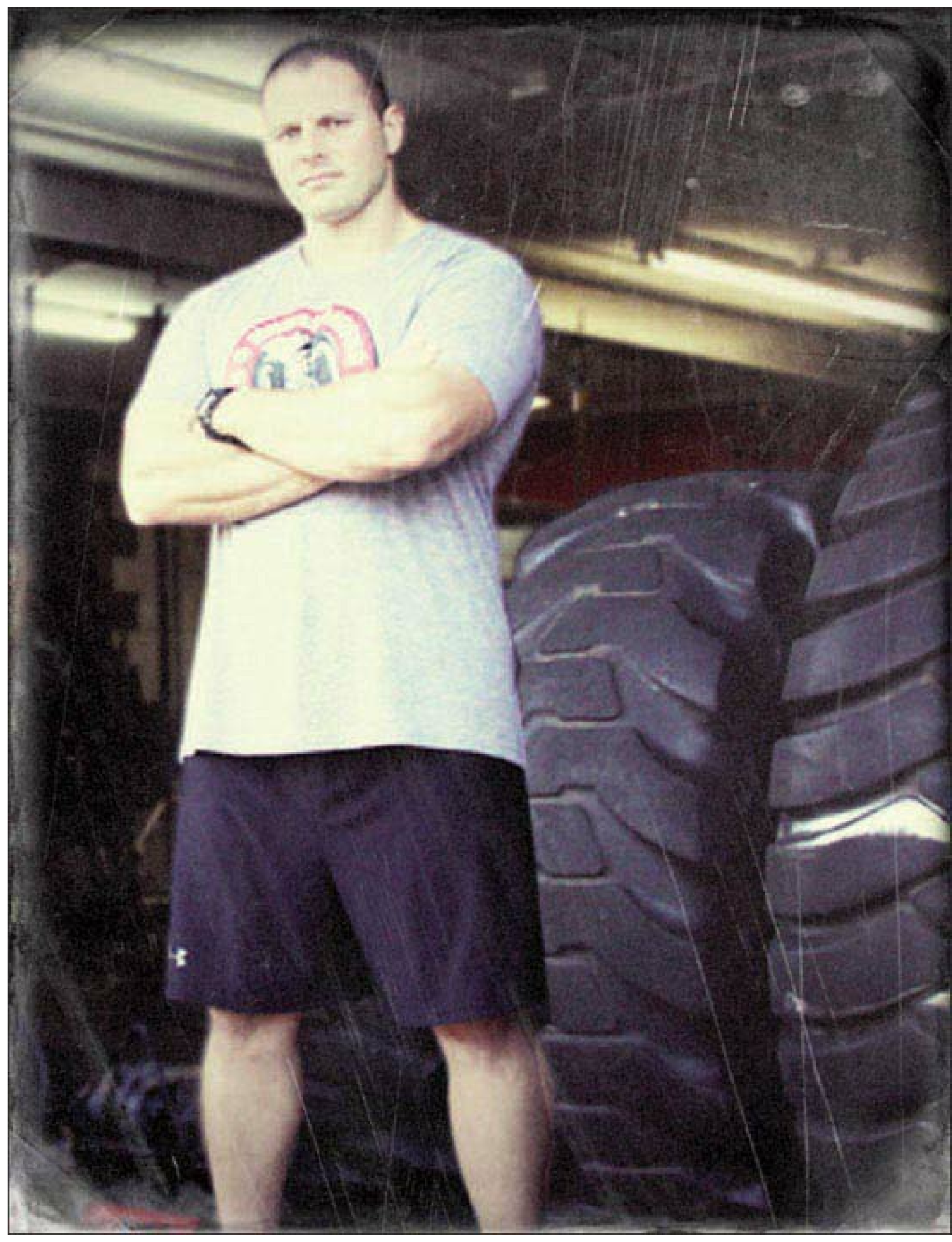
This athlete thrives on doing no more work than that which is exactly needed — and oftentimes less. This athlete CAN change his personality, but it takes time. He is often timid and afraid to push the envelope in training. He will not try to break a PR or even go heavier unless you repeatedly remind him to ramp up his intensity and train harder.

If given an opportunity to train three times a week or four times a week with a coach, this athlete will go with the 3 x week option or even less. While others stay after and do extra credit, this athlete is already walking out the door.

In competition, during close battles, this athlete tends to be the least likely to come out on top, as the confidence is not as high as the person who KNOWS he has out worked his competition and pushed his preparation above and beyond what his competition has done.

This athlete is also quiet and shy, and you can sometimes lose him in a larger crowd of athletes. This athlete needs more of your attention to ensure he is training hard enough to get stronger. In the long run, this athlete can be changed — not always, but it can happen, and it does take longer to achieve progress with this athlete than the others.

Matching training intensity to suit a personality type is the art of coaching. The art of coaching changes with the different personalities and also depends on what time of year it is, in season, off season, etc. If you see that someone needs a boost of mental toughness and must start pushing out of their comfort zone then you need to be able to design a program that pushes them out of their comfort zone.



UNDERGROUND STRENGTH GYM MEMORIES

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any of the athletes I've worked with have taught me lessons about being flexible in my training methods to produce greater results.

CASE STUDY # 1

The Original Underground Wrecking Crew

During the years 2002 - 2006, when I was training wrestlers and football players out of my house in a two-car garage, I was very dialed in to how each athlete felt from day to day, and I approached the volume of each training session individually and accordingly.

Most of these athletes had been training with me since they were freshmen or sophomores in high school. As more mature juniors and seniors, we were learning together that their bodies and minds reacted to training stress extremely well. When they were younger and I was less skilled in the art of coaching, the training was not as dialed in for each individual. But as they matured so did I.

I always encouraged them to be honest with themselves and with me when approaching each and every workout. To go against how they truly felt each day would lead to a less than optimal result. Auto-regulation was the ticket with all their workouts.

This meant that some training sessions they would train longer and more intense than other days. They never stayed in a rigid zone of always training with high intensity or always training with optimal intensity. As their daily energy levels varied, so did our workouts.

During the in season, our workouts were minimalist and optimal, training 30 minutes on average and eventually as short as 20 minutes as the season came to an end the athletes would de-load before their big, end of the season competitions.

I remember the parents were concerned with these shorter workouts, wondering, "Hey, I thought we were supposed to train for one hour. Didn't we pay for one hour of training?" They were confused with training for results instead of training for a predetermined amount of time. Just because somebody doesn't crawl out of the weight room or doesn't throw up during a workout is not what determines whether it's a good workout or not.

Some athletes NEED that kick in the ass, they need that blend of science and hell, they need to feel that nauseated feeling during a workout and learn what it's like to train hard and go full throttle. This teaches them that it's OK to push beyond their preconceived limits and that they will survive. Some athletes are scared, and the best way to boost their confidence is to push them through some hellish workouts and teach them to celebrate the victory of coming out on top when it's all said and done.

The wrestling group I trained from the early garage days were some of the most successful wrestlers I had ever trained. They did not start or show up as successful wrestlers, though. They were slightly above average in skill but most importantly, they were WAY above and beyond average in their desire to do the work necessary to achieve great success. The success they achieved by the time they were juniors and seniors in high

school was not just because they became great in wrestling, it was because we dialed in their training to completely match their needs.

In doing so, they transformed themselves into superior physical monsters compared to the majority of their competition. They gained an edge over others who were NOT training as smart or as hard as they were. This commitment to their training also had an immense carry over as a confidence booster. The smarter we trained, the better their performance became, and the more they believed in their ability to be the best wrestler in their respective weight classes.

Our in season workouts were short, with careful attention paid not only to their day-to-day energy levels, but also to upcoming tournaments. When the rest of their competition was increasing their training volume, running long distances, and cutting weight, we did the opposite. We trained smarter, never did long distance runs, and focused on recovery of the mind and body.

As the season was coming to an end, I decreased their training volume gradually so that they could de-load towards the end of the season. The de-load week gave them greater energy and motivation to compete. The wrestlers who were not de-loading were often injured and burnt out by the end of the season.

Before their big tournament in the middle of the season, we took that week off from lifting to give them a chance at extra recovery. Same went for the final week of the season. Rather than use their energy reserves for training, we took the final week off from lifting so their extra energy reserves could be unleashed on the mat, not in the weight room or outdoors running long distances like the majority of other wrestlers.

In a nut shell, we trained very smart and lived by auto-regulation. In season, we trained hard enough, but no harder than necessary. This worked perfectly for this group of wrestlers because they also did all the right things outside of our training all year round:

🔑 *They trained aggressively in their sports skill, which I encouraged them to always do, just as John Smith encouraged. Their high-intensity drilling and live wrestling would also benefit them in the form of developing wrestling specific conditioning, not just getting better at technique. Other wrestlers didn't push with this level of intensity IN practice, and thus had to make up for it with extra running and extra wrestling after high school practice. While we trained just enough, others trained in excess, which decreased their performance due to overtraining and excess stress.*

🔑 *These wrestlers took their nutrition seriously. They ate healthy foods & avoided cutting weight to ensure they could eat three meals a day. Even on days they had matches, everyone ate breakfast. Their competition and even the coaches pushed wrestlers to cut excess weight, which decreased performance and increased injury chances. The excess weight cutting would have removed all the muscle and strength*

gains if these wrestlers would have followed the rest of the wrestling community with the excessive weight cutting.

- NOT one of these wrestlers engaged in the typical distance running during the season like most other wrestlers do. Instead, they trusted me and practiced their skills aggressively to develop wrestling specific conditioning. They took advantage of their school practice and left it all on the mat. Nowadays, we see wrestlers training almost daily after their school practice, literally doubling the normal training time, thinking that more is better. More is not always better. Smarter training is what is better.*
- During our off season workouts these wrestlers trained with very high intensity 2 - 3 x week with me coupled with wrestling at a club another 2 - 3 x week. They had more freedom to experiment with training as I stated earlier. This is when we would push the training and experiment with the effects of the training as they would compete in off season tournaments.*

CASE STUDY # 2

Just Enough & No More—The Minimalist Approach

Several years later, when The Underground Strength Gym was in a warehouse and not my home garage, I was training a high school wrestler, a senior, who was on the verge of serious burnout & was second guessing if he even wanted to wrestle his final year in high school.

He was a state champion wrestler several times in middle school, and was ahead of the competition at the time. Then, when he got to high school, the pressure from his father piled up year after year, making him second-guess his passion for the sport. His father would scream from the stands during matches and insisted that he was the expert coach when the father never wrestled a day in his life. His father insisted on his son running all the time, training in excess all the time and it eventually back fired. This talented wrestler was not going to wrestle his senior year if the pressure continued for one more second.

He came to me for training only one month before the season started, as I had trained his older brother from my parents' house a few years prior. I told him to train with me only once or twice a week, no more. He was shocked with the minimalist approach, as he was used to running and wrestling almost every day of the week.

I said to him, "I don't want you to do any extra training on top of your wrestling practice when the season begins." While this wrestler would be home resting after practice, most wrestlers would go out for distance running; they would join a wrestling club during the season and then train two, three and even up to four extra wrestling sessions per week.

This wrestler would come in and train with me for no longer than 20 minutes, oftentimes slightly less. His workouts were often only two or three exercises, sub-max effort only, usually leaving 2 - 3 reps in the tank.

I knew that the key to his training would be to help him leave the gym feeling better than when he walked in the gym. A minimalist approach would be perfect to reduce any unnecessary stress to his life.

A sample minimalist in season wrestling workout for him would look like this after a short warm-up and foam rolling:

Before and after every workout he would foam roll for 5 minutes and finish with a few quick sets of grip, abs, and band pull aparts & dislocators for shoulder health. I had him get in and out of the gym extremely fast. He LOVED it. He loved knowing that he would be in and out of the gym in record time. He could still have a social life, hang with friends, get to sleep at a normal time, and not cut weight.

SAMPLE WORKOUT # 1

1A) Deadlift 5 × 2 (60-80% of 1 RM)

1B) Kettlebell Swings 5 × 6 reps

Then, a 5 Minute Circuit of:

2A) Handstand Push Ups x submax reps

2B) Rope Climbs

3) 2 or 3 quick sets of grip and abs

SAMPLE WORKOUT # 2

5 Rounds of:

1A) Swiss Grip Barbell Floor Press 5 × 3 - 6 reps

1B) Mixed Grip Pull Ups or Recline Rows 5 x submax reps

1C) Kettlebell Swings 5 × 6 reps

He loved not feeling like an exhausted zombie day in and day out. His father insisted that his workouts should leave him crawling out of the gym and nothing less would suffice. In sports ranging from youth to high school, overbearing parents cause young athletes an overabundance of stress. I've seen it break kids and cause them to burn out and quit a sport they once loved. Consequently, we don't allow parents in our gym, as it has proven to be a negative experience for the kids. This allows me to implement the training that is best for these athletes.

For this wrestler in particular, I knew this minimalist style of training was the perfect medicine for him on both the physical and mental levels. Any more than the minimum amount of work or any added intensity would turn him off to the training.

This minimalist approach worked like magic, while his emotional and physical stress was reduced to a minimum. In turn, this elevated his joy for training, improved his recovery, and optimized his chances of peaking for the state tournament at the end of the season.

To this date, he has been the most successful wrestler that ever came out of that high school, with over 140 career wins. He wound up taking fourth in the state his senior year — a very solid showing, earning him all state honors. His success came about because we treated him as an individual and dialed in the training to match his mentality, his physical needs, emotional needs and to match his daily energy levels. In essence, that is the gist of auto regulation.



CASE STUDY # 3

The Baseball BEAST

The Baseball BEAST, was a high school player, but not the stereotypical baseball player. He was an athlete who really loved training heavy on a frequent basis, and who thrived on heavy squatting, deadlifts, farmer walks, and the like.

When the in-season rolled around, I feared that if we kept training him heavy coupled with his intense practice, game, and travel schedule, that it would take away from his power & overall performance on the field. Heavy lifting is what this player loved to do.

At the onset of the season, things were looking great with his performance. He was hitting doubles & triples and expressed to me that he was feeling better than ever — throwing faster, hitting harder, etc.

As the season wore on and progressed past the halfway point, he was now hitting singles and doubles, no more triples. He told me that he wasn't feeling as strong and as powerful. I realized that I broke my own rule about sticking to what the athlete needs physically and psychologically. We had stopped our heavy squats and our heavy overall lifting. These were THE lifts that helped him achieve greater success in the first place, so for me to drop them was a BIG mistake. As soon as his season began, I followed what would traditionally work when I should have focused on his individual needs, both physically and psychologically. Louie Simmons always emphasized to me that a coach should never eliminate the exercises or methods that helped someone achieve their improved performance in the first place.



When baseball season began, I switched his training and focused more on sub-max lifting rather than weights above 80% of his 1RM, which he thrived on. Lifting heavy for sets of 2 - 5 reps was what he loved to do.

I was too concerned with pushing him too much during the season, but he thrived on those heavy lifts. And if heavy lifting is what made him feel strong and explosive, if that's what gave him the confidence, then I KNEW that heavy lifting is what we had to return to doing. As soon as we got back to those heavy lifts, he was back to hitting doubles and triples, and he was more explosive on his running and throwing.

This taught me a powerful lesson that science and following the rules are NOT always absolute. Even though the training may not match the way the body is supposed to react to certain training, it is oftentimes someone's personality that matters when determining the style and intensity of their training. Here are sample workouts that The Baseball BEAST does on his "Extra" Workout days. The life of a champion.

As you can see, on his extra days, The Baseball BEAST trained heavy and didn't shy away on volume. He also spent adequate time on foam rolling and soft tissue work for 10 - 15 minutes throughout his entire workout. His commitment for training was not something

we taught him. His passion for baseball and hard training drove him to this type of commitment.

When Coach Ethan Reeve was not a coach, but a high school wrestler, he would do 500 pushups every day, both in season and off season. He did his 500 pushups after weigh-ins before he wrestled in the state finals, and he won states!

Coach Reeve was doing 500 pushups daily not just for the edge it gave him physically, but because he felt that it was this high volume of training and work ethic that helped him dominate the competition. His confidence was sky high because of his work ethic.

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Various Box & Hurdle Jumps x 15 - 20 Total Reps
- 2) Sumo Deadlift: Work Up to 3 heavy sets in the 2 - 3 rep range
- 3) Heavy Farmer Walk Variation (Kettlebells, Jerry Cans, Adding Chains to Object & Around Neck) 3 - 4 heavy sets x 150 - 200 ft
- 4) Various Weighted Ab Exercises 3 - 5 sets
- 5) Grip Training 3 - 5 sets

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Various Box & Hurdle Jumps x 15 - 20 Total Reps
- 2) Box Squats (Use Different Bars); Work up to 2 - 3 heavy sets of 2 - 3 reps
- 3A) Swiss Bar Floor Press Or Bench Press: Work up to 3 heavy sets x 3 - 5 reps
- 3B) 1 Arm Dumbbell Rows / Chest Supported Rows x 6 - 12 reps per set
- 4) Run 1/2 - 1 mile AFAP (As Fast As Possible)

WORKOUT # 3

- 1A) Handstand Push Ups 5 x submax reps
- 1B) Weighted Pull Ups 5 x 3 - 6 reps
- 2A) Double Kettlebell Swings 4 x 6 - 10 reps
- 2B) Prowler / Sled Sprints 4 x 150 ft
- 3A) Heavy Band Triceps Work 4 x Max Reps
- 3B) Kettlebell Bottoms Up Cleans 4 x 5 / 5 reps

According to science, doing 500 pushups before a BIG event is not supposed to help you; it's supposed to fatigue you. Doing 500 pushups a day for anyone would more than likely crush them physically. Coach Reeve felt the need to do these push ups everyday because of the confidence it gave him when competing. He knew that he had outworked his

competition so he had no doubts when wrestling. He believed he would win every time.

Coach Reeve is a unique example as are Navy SEALs and other Special Forces military personnel who have proved that current science can't account for everything that's important in training. Training results can be affected by how the athlete feels and thinks about the training. So, when you train or perhaps train others, don't be afraid to go against the perfect workout to meet the psychological needs that help improve performance.

Dan Gable, another unique example, would train 7 days a week, 7 or 8 hours a day. He went running the day AFTER winning an Olympic gold medal where no one even scored a point on him during the Olympics. His work ethic translated to an indomitable spirit and extreme mental toughness. That type of training regimen would kill the average man, but Dan Gable's mentality thrived in this high-volume, high-intensity approach.

These are all unique examples, but there are certainly tweaks that you can make to match the personality of athletes as well as your own day to day feelings. I've trained athletes that have thrived on high volume training, the complete opposite of those that thrived on shorter, 20-30 minute workouts.

These highly motivated athletes would lift extremely heavy year round, regardless of the time of year. Their attitude coupled with bodies being extremely resilient to heavy lifting didn't phase them negatively or stress them emotionally. They responded the opposite of how the typical athlete would normally respond to this style of training on a long term basis.

I've trained lighter wrestlers (120-135 lbs) who would rather come in and train with the big football players so they would be forced to lift heavier, training side by side with guys 50 to 100 lbs heavier than they were. This also benefited the football players, as they were forced to train at a faster pace to keep up with these wrestlers.

Even though the training volume has been unique to each athlete, the choice of exercises are often similar as the basics are what always deliver results. When programming your workouts, don't stray from the basics!



CASE STUDY # 4

Strong & Useless

I once trained a big, strong, useless football player. He could squat, bench, and deadlift the house and came to us the summer before college to prep for college football. He had been training in the typical program that inexperienced coaches used and it hurt him BIG time.

The warm-up crushed him and it would take him close to 30 minutes to finish while others finished in 10 minutes. When it came to doing farmer walks, after one set of 150 ft of carries, his grip would fail and the kettlebells or farmer handles would literally fly out of his hands. Every time the weight flew out of his hands and he could no longer continue, he would get pissed at himself and act angry, complaining and acting as if he was shocked at his inability to not carry these implements.

But, the truth came out when I dug deeper and asked why this was happening. His training schedule was such that he trained with us only twice a week. I said to him after a few missed attempts to carry the farmer handles, "Stop being pissed off. Focus and keep training hard so you can get stronger."

Then I asked him, "What are you doing when you're not here? You train with us twice a week. You've got five other days to train." He looked at me with a blank stare and said, well, nothing.

That really set me off! I got pissed off and I said, "Dude, this is why you are weak physically and mentally. You might be able to squat, bench and deadlift the house but the fact of the matter is you've got NO mental toughness and NO durability and you quit when the workout gets tough."

As he stared at me with a blank look on his face, I added, "Your training program needs to be the other way around. Instead of two workouts a week with five days of rest, you should be getting here for five workouts a week with two days of rest."

From that day on I stopped having him squat, bench, and deadlift. Getting him stronger in those lifts would be of no benefit for him physically or mentally. I gave him what he needed, NOT what he wanted.

I started to train him more like an animal. I eliminated the barbell and began using lots of kettlebell exercises with him — movements such as snatches, clean and presses, swings, goblet squats, and all types of carries, from overhead carries to rack carries and farmer walks. Each workout started AND finished with sled drags. He hated me for it.

I threw sledgehammer work into the mix for time, and added high reps to boost conditioning, mobility, and grip strength. Farm boy strength would help boost his work

capacity. Drag the sled, followed by farmer walks, followed by sledge hammer strikes on a tire.

Here are sample workouts that we used. This was after the warm-up:

On the days this athlete wasn't training with us, I told him he had to go to the local park or local playground to perform hill sprints, push his car across an empty parking lot for as many sets as possible in 10 minutes, perform walking lunges, bear crawls, pushups, and high-rep squats.

When he left that summer to play college football as a freshman, I heard about how his football season went, and it was a disappointing season, yet not surprising. His coach told me that he was hurt on a regular basis during practice, sitting the bench a whole lot more than he engaged in battle on the gridiron. Most practices he was complaining about something bothering him or hurting him.

One short summer at 2 x week training wasn't enough time to get him where we needed him to be both physically and mentally. Training at this stage of competition requires a bigger commitment than 2 x week training. If you're reading this and you need to push yourself to the next level, make sure you push beyond 2 x week training. I shouldn't even need to state this.

When this football player was in high school, the weight room program was all about moving heavy weights. Technique wasn't taught properly so it was never enforced. Many other football players are stuck following this typical football strength program and unfortunately, without much care to proper technique or training beyond low rep, heavy barbell lifts with crappy technique, the results just don't transfer to the football field.

WORKOUT # 1

1A) Double Kettlebell Clean & Press 5 × 5

1B) Recline Rows 5 x submax reps

2A) Walking Lunges (Holding Weight) 4 × 15 / 15

2B) Kettlebell Swings 4 × 10 - 15 reps

3A) Sledge Hammer Strikes 5 × 10 / 10 (switch top hand at 10th rep)

3B) Kettlebell Farmer Walks 5 × 150 ft

3C) Sled / Prowler 5 × 150 ft

For lunges we would add resistance with sandbags, kettlebells, dumbbells or a barbell.

WORKOUT # 2

1A) Kettlebell Goblet Squat 5 × 6

1B) Kettlebell Swings 5 × 6

2A) Hands Elevated Push Ups 5 x submax reps

2B) 1 Arm Kettlebell Snatch 5 × 5 / 5

3A) Sandbag Zercher Carry 4 × 150 ft

3B) Sled / Prowler 4 × 150 ft

3C) Battling Ropes 4 × 30 seconds

WORKOUT # 3

1A) 1 Arm Kettlebell Clean & Press 5 × 5 / 5

1B) 1 Arm Kettlebell Row 5 × 5 / 5

1C) Jump Rope 5 × 100 reps

2) Prowler 10 × 150 ft

In high school you can get away with this, especially if your competition isn't strong. But once you're in college or at the higher levels of high school competition, the cream of the crop rises to the top, so your training needs to prepare you adequately.

Yes, he moved some big loads on the barbell, but none of his training was what he personally needed to improve his performance as an athlete. This is why it is critical that you approach your own training — or if you're a coach, the training of others — with at least some form of uniqueness and individuality to attack weak areas.

I wish I could have worked with this football player a little longer and met him a little earlier. Some nutritional tweaks and some training tweaks would have gone a long way. This experience taught me that strength is not the priority; athleticism is the priority.



CASE STUDY # 5

ALL HEART

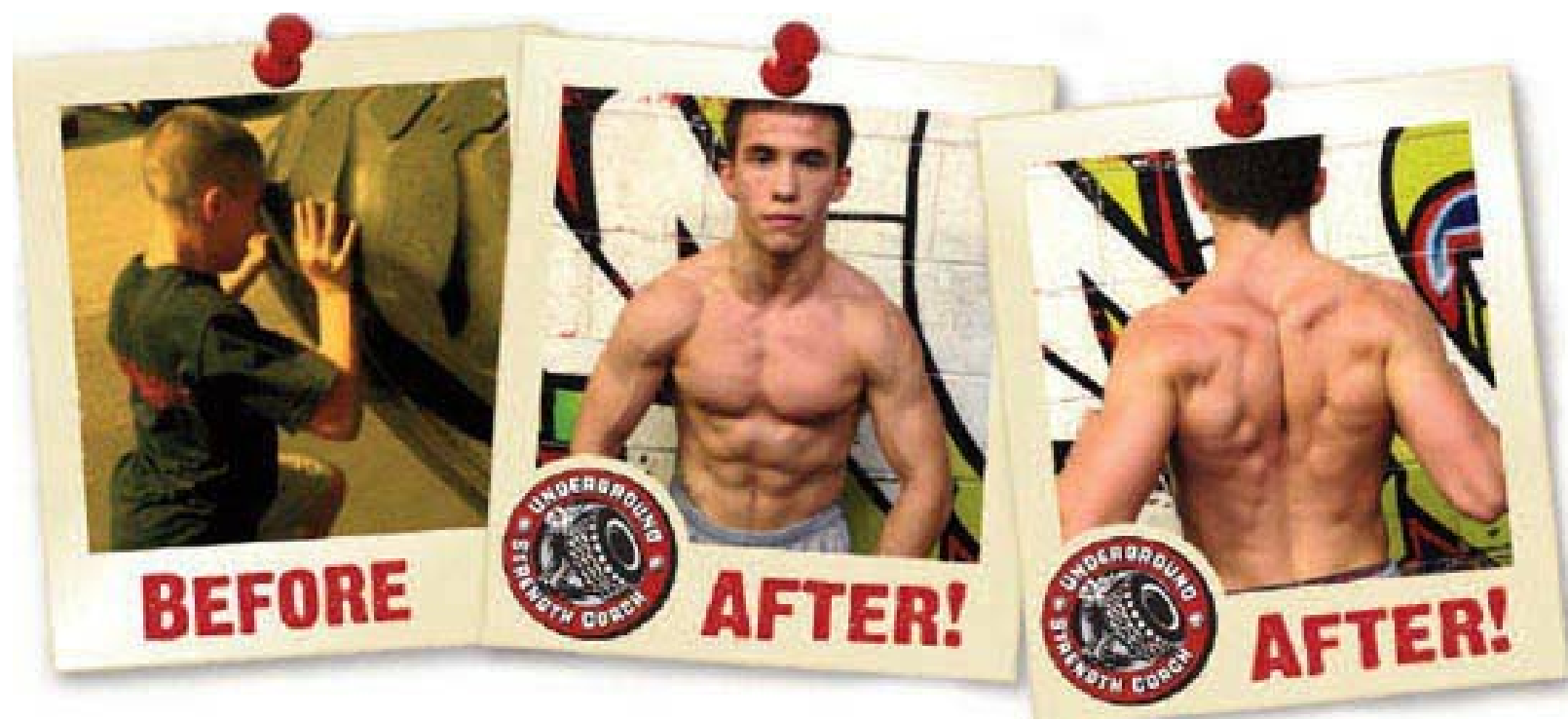
A dad called my gym in March one year, which is when wrestling season ends in NJ. The Dad told me about his hard working son who had just finished his freshman season with zero wins and 15 losses. I paid attention immediately when I heard about him going a full season with NO wins. It hit my heart deep and took me to a painful time I hate to remember.

The dad was supportive and ready to bring his son in for training 3 x week. The added challenge was his son was 88 lbs, 15 lbs under the lightest weight class, which at the time was 103 lbs.

Everything we told this wrestler to do while he was in AND out of the gym, he did . He pushed himself hard in training every single workout. He joined a wrestling club to improve his skills and balanced his training at The Underground with added skills.

His nutrition was spot on. We advised him on how to change his breakfast, pack his own lunch, eat snacks through the day, eat post-workout meals, and so on. The kid was ALL heart and a true work horse. He had all the drive, desire, and determination but was missing the proper guidance in training and nutrition.

His next season he went 15-1 as a sophomore. He was a solid 105 lb wrestler that season, and weighed 110 lbs before the season started, allowing him to naturally lose weight from practice while still eating and lifting big. He went from 88 lbs to 110 lbs in about nine months. His strength was impressive at such a light weight. He trained side by side with all the other athletes — flipping tires, dragging sleds, climbing ropes and performing calisthenics, throwing around heavy kettlebells, sandbags, and barbells.



His junior year was a big success and he achieved over 20 wins that season. He was becoming pound for pound the strongest athlete at The Underground. He wrestled 115 lbs his junior year, and his strength was unmatched. He found what held him back was his lack of skills, so he aggressively devoted time to wrestling and still trained 3 x week.

His senior year was a true ending to a Cinderella story. He qualified for the state tournament and had just shy of 30 wins that season. Both of these are awesome feats in and of themselves! I have NEVER known a wrestler to qualify for states after never winning a match as a freshman. Not only did this wrestler do the right things, he did one of the most overlooked things, which is training year round.

I want to emphasize that his training at The Underground was only part of the puzzle. The other part of the puzzle was his awesome wrestling coaches, who helped him dramatically improve his skills. With both his training and wrestling married so to speak, his mind power improved dramatically.

He never skipped a beat, in season or off season. He never saw any time of the year as the "off season". When you want something, be ready to work for it!



CASE STUDY # 6

Curls

I'm not talking about biceps curls. I'm talking about Curls, the kid that no one pegged to become a champion, who went on to defy the odds to become a standout football player and a 2-time winner of DeFranco's World's Strongest Athlete. When Curls was in elementary school I was his Physical Education Teacher in 3rd - 5th grades.

He was chubby, slower than everyone else, and was always tagged first. When he got into middle school he began doing basic calisthenics such as pushups and situps. He also jumped rope. His frame filled out as he got taller and added more muscle.

In high school he continued his passion for sports, except he was no longer the slowest or least athletic kid on the team. He became a leader on the field. His sophomore year, Curls began training in the Underground Garage. His parents signed him up for our elite training course and he trained 3 x week. From the garage to the backyard to the fields, Curls pushed his limits with every workout, and trained to break records.

He was strong and powerful on the football field — agile, mobile, and hostile as I like to say. By the time senior year rolled around, he was 240 lbs and fairly lean. His strength and power were impressive, and helped him gain an advantage over his competition. His senior year he decided he would join the wrestling team.

Curls had never wrestled before, but he was strong and athletic so he wanted to enter a new challenge and go for it. Of course I encouraged him. I'm a big believer that 2-sport athletes become more complete athletes.

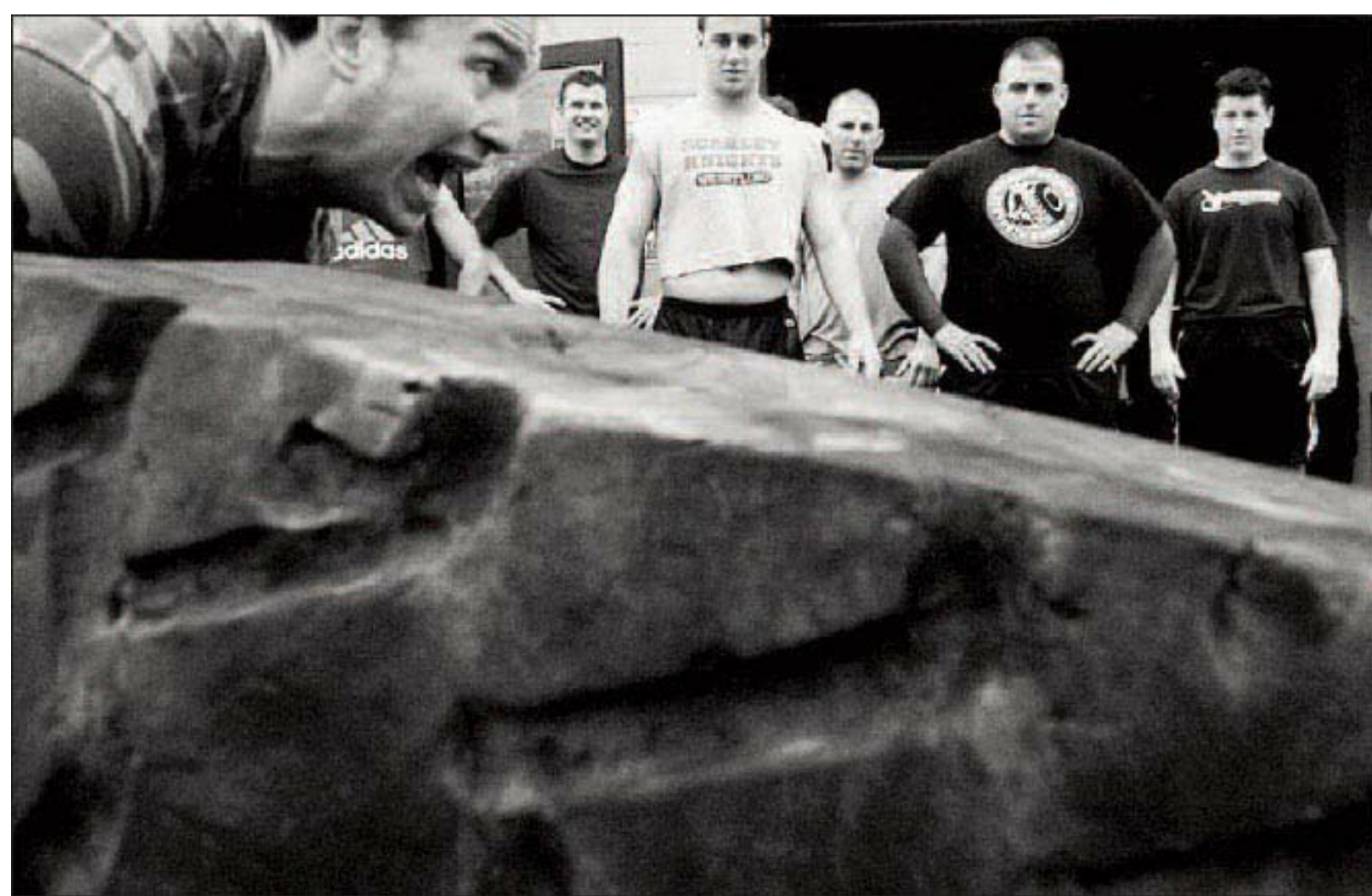
Curls decided he would shoot for the 220 lb weight class, which was about 20 lbs from his current weight. Wrestling practice and the intense, regular training helped him shed the excess fat extremely fast, and he got down to 220 lbs. It sounds like a lot until you've wrestled. The bigger guys, have an easier time losing weight.

Curls had a solid showing and even qualified for the regional tournament as a first year wrestler! When wrestling season ended, Curls jumped right back to training with us 3 x week where as in season he trained with the wrestlers 1 x week.

Curls had committed to a football program at a top D3 school and we had to prepare him for the competition. His body was in much better shape — leaner, more mobile and flexible and overall more athletic.

Curls was able to squat deeper with greater ease, his explosive power had improved, and his mental toughness had increased. Rather than gaining back all his weight and chasing 240 lbs, he let his body gain weight naturally and he topped out around 230 lbs.

Joining the wrestling team was one of the best things for Curls. His overall athleticism improved and his football skills improved because of his wrestling. Football players who need more athleticism should join the wrestling team, while wrestlers who need to get meaner and tougher should play football. It's a long season to go from Football into Wrestling (approximately 7 months of sport when combined), but if you feel you need to improve athleticism, toughness, and expand your abilities this is something to put into practice.



CASE STUDY # 7

60 Lbs Lighter

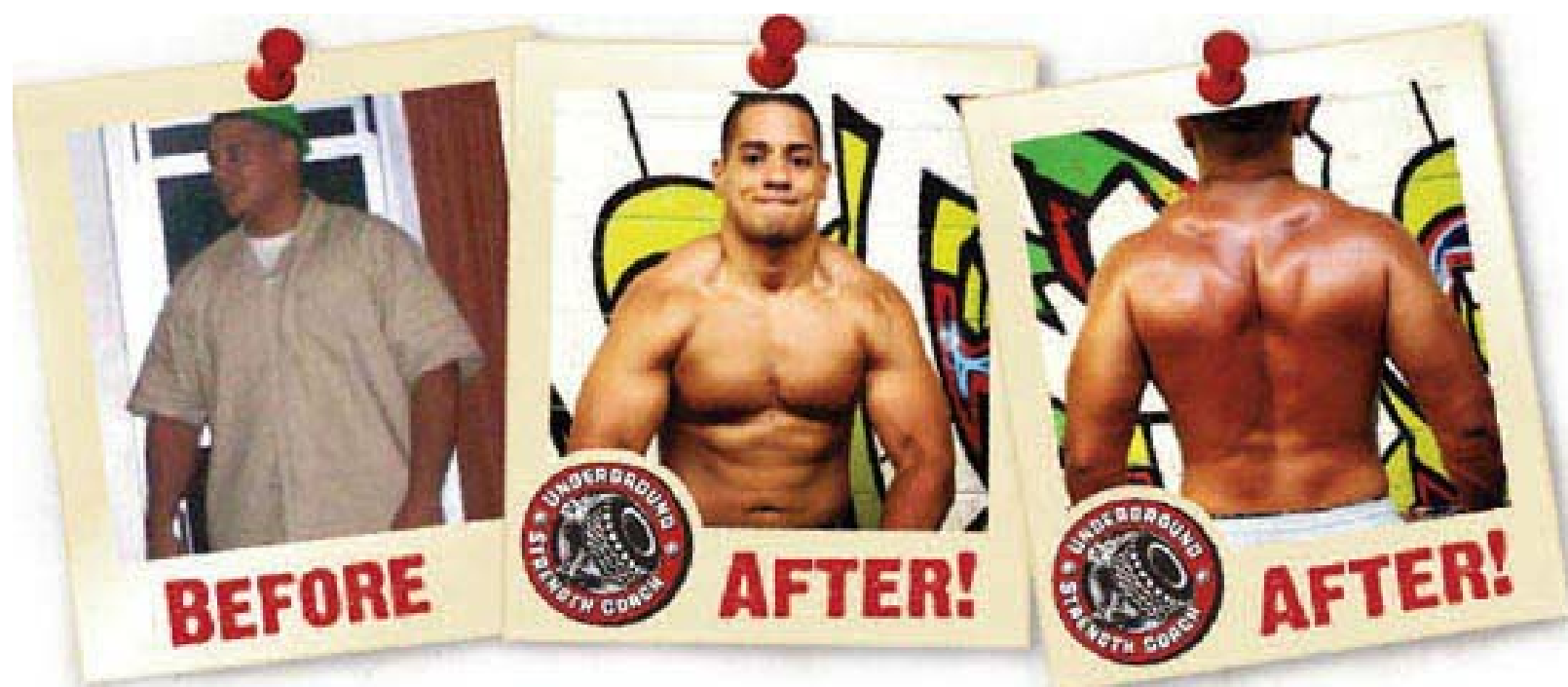
A college football player started training at The Underground several months prior to his final season of football. He was a star player on his team and he was a BEAST in training as well. His coaches encouraged him to constantly gain weight. "Just keep getting bigger" was a regular piece of advice given to him. As the season approached he expressed how he hated hovering around the 270 lb mark and couldn't wait until he could lose the excess weight that he felt was slowing him down.

After college he began working full time and yearned to get back to the gym and train as hard as he did before. He felt he was losing his edge and wanted to engage in tough training. He returned to The Underground lighter than he was in college, but still wanted to lose more weight.

His training never changed when he returned, but his nutrition did. He followed intermittent fasting and now hovers around 210 lbs, some 60 lbs lighter than his college football days.

He now has a rock solid set of abs and his strength, power, athleticism, and especially his health have actually improved, even though he is no longer a competitive football player.

The point of this case study is that you should not always chase being bigger for the sake of carrying more weight. Let your frame fill out naturally. If your weight interferes with your performance and health, don't go there. This football player improved every aspect of his performance while dropping significant excess weight — useless weight for that matter.



CASE STUDY # 8

Modern Day Milo

He was an 8th grader when he started training with us. His sports of focus were football and wrestling, although football was his true passion. He quickly began showing up early for his workouts and staying late.

If he showed up early he did high repetition work of calisthenics such as pushups, pullups, rows, squats, and lunges. At the end of his workouts he would grab a sandbag, toss it over his shoulder or on his back, and walk a few laps around the neighboring gym, about 100 meters each lap.

The calisthenics boosted his strength quicker than those who didn't put in the extra work. The sandbag carrying went on for years. Yes, years. I took notice of how quickly his legs and back grew in strength and size from this. It reminded me of the tales of Milo of Croton, who was said to be a highly feared wrestler, who developed his tremendous strength by carrying a baby calf on his back. As Milo grew in age and the calf grew heavier and heavier, his strength grew to legendary levels.



This is the simple lesson of progressive overload coupled with commitment and consistency. Carrying heavy objects is one of the simplest forms of training, yet it is very challenging. This athlete was very impressive in his football and wrestling performance. His off season was focused on lifting, and he did little if any off season wrestling. His athleticism and overpowering strength gave him the edge on both the gridiron and the mat. Moral of the story? Carry heavy objects and don't underestimate the power of calisthenics, especially during the early years of training.

FILLING THE GAP

Learning what makes somebody excel in their performance through training is critical. If this book is for your own training, then you must know how and when to push yourself and when to back off. Learn which exercises improve your performance and learn to remove the exercises and methods that hinder or do little for your performance.

It's not solely about what the science says and how many optimal sets and optimal reps are required, because everybody is different. It's ideally about matching the training to meet your physical, mental, and emotional needs.

When I use various strength and conditioning methods with athletes, I am essentially filling the gaps that they are not addressing through their own training in sports. The performance training is what helps them achieve the success they want in sports. This success would be out of their reach if we didn't fill the gap.

What does it mean to "fill the gap?"

If someone doesn't have enough muscle and that's what is holding them back in sports success, we will utilize bodybuilding style sets and reps, higher volume, and attack their weak areas to pack that muscle onto them.

If somebody doesn't have enough strength, then we're going to focus on specific strength training methods and exercises that will give them the edge they need with added strength to succeed at a higher level.

If you need a specific set of physical/mental traits and you are missing one or more of these traits, the objective of the training is to develop those traits into strong points to improve your performance.

The reason this book is so important to me is because the painful mistakes in the early 90s will haunt me for a lifetime. The way I trained not only hurt my performance dramatically, but tough times like these are unforgettable. You can choose to let them keep you down or you can stand up strong and do something positive. I choose to commit my coaching to helping others avoid these pains.

On my gym wall I have a quote that says....



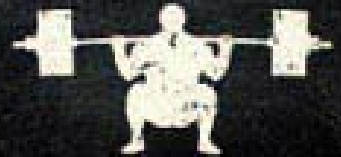
THERE ARE TWO
PAINS IN LIFE.



THE PAIN OF REGRET AND
THE PAIN OF DISCIPLINE.

THE PAIN OF REGRET
WILL HAUNT YOU FOR A LIFETIME.

THE PAIN OF DISCIPLINE
WILL GO AWAY WHEN YOU
TASTE VICTORY.



I choose to help others experience success through discipline. Athletes will experience pain and disappointment, but when they give their all, they can always walk away proudly with their chins held high, knowing they always gave their all.

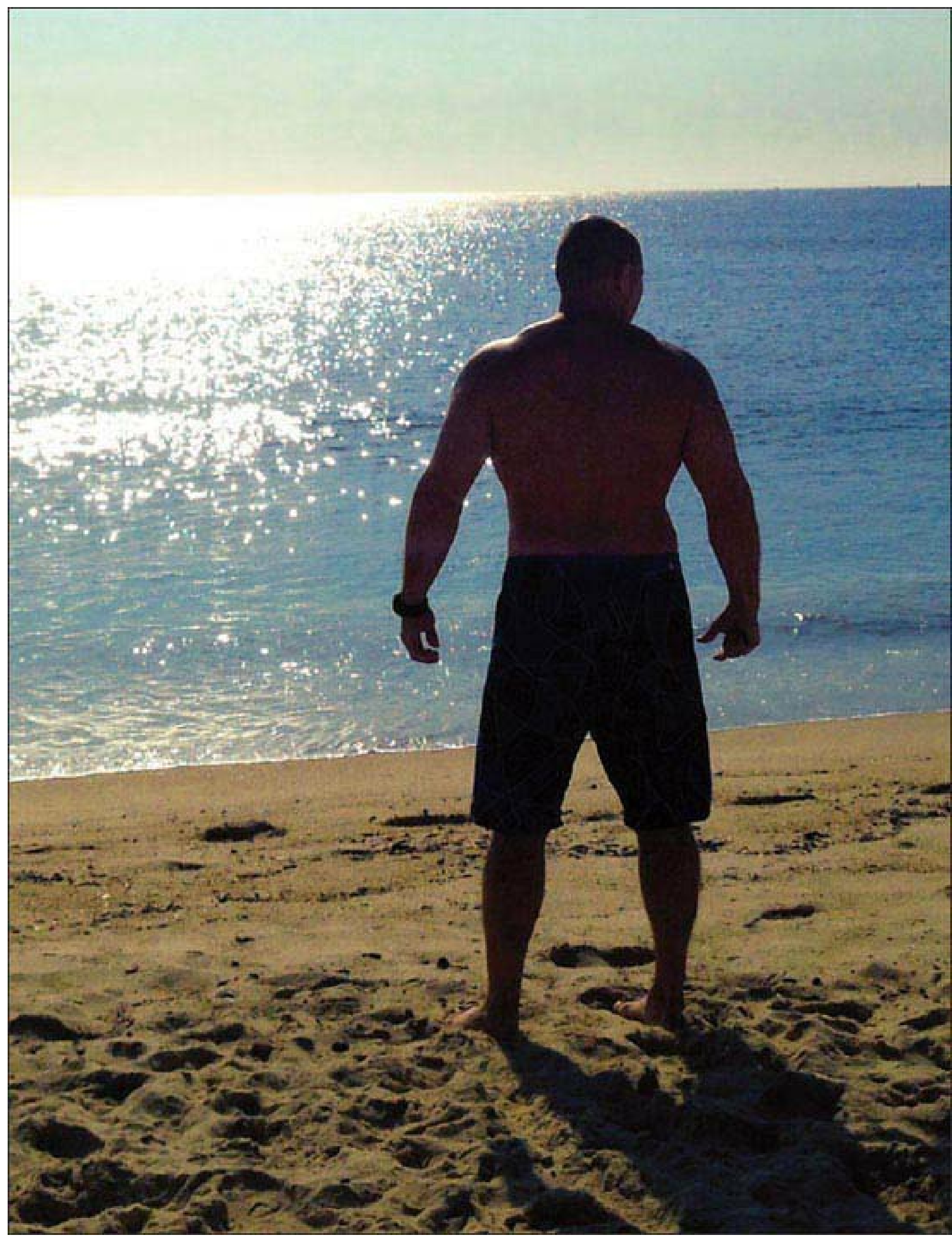
My training methods, especially my in season training methods, didn't help me at all. Instead, I became weaker, felt emotionally exhausted around the clock, and performed way below my potential.

Although that was the early 90s, I STILL see coaches training and encouraging athletes to do the same crap I did so long ago. It does nothing but hurt these athletes, and takes away their opportunities to experience success. Rather than knocking on the doors of coaches hoping they will be open-minded enough to listen, I will have a greater chance of helping others if they can use this information on their own, without waiting for a coach to take action. Unfortunately, not enough coaches are open minded enough or even accepting of help from expert strength and conditioning coaches.

I must admit that when I see an athletic team that is not achieving success, it really bothers me because I know that a solid strength and conditioning program can dramatically help such a team. Coaches need to drop their egos and allow experts to come in and help them. This is called caring, plain and simple. The kids come first, period, end of story.

The other issue is we need coaches to be better educated — not just sport coaches, but strength and conditioning coaches. Nowadays it's too easy to rent a small space, order some cool looking equipment like kettlebells, sleds, and battling ropes. Couple it with some marketing savvy and you can convince others that you're an expert. Being a strength coach is not a joke, nor is it something people should get involved with because they lost their job at the bank. A performance coach is on this earth to change the lives of athletes for the better. Take that role extremely seriously!

I hope this book reaches the hands of others who are stuck in the dark ages, as well as those who are hungry to learn. Learning should never end. Always ask questions and always seek more knowledge. We ALL have the potential to be stronger, faster, tougher, and more explosive. If you're a coach or parent, it is your duty and obligation to help your child/athlete achieve their greatest potential by educating yourself and opening your mind up to effective training methods.



REST & RECOVERY

As much as I speak about intensity, pushing the envelope, going through hellish workouts, and mental toughness, I would be remiss if I left out how to incorporate proper rest and recovery methods to help you perform even better.

When I was training for wrestling in high school, I couldn't stop training if you paid me to stop. I was addicted to training, and it caught up to me in no time. My mind wanted to train more, but my body wasn't on the same page, unfortunately. Even with signs of fatigue, injuries, and poor performance, I was confused and didn't understand that resting is a crucial part of the training plan.

By the time I was 16, my knees started feeling pain and soreness on a regular basis. I began making my own double padded knee pads for wrestling, taking knee pads from the heavyweights and sliding them over my own knee pads. Back then there were no volleyball-type knee pads for wrestlers, which I feel every wrestler should use even if their knees are healthy. Don't wait for pain and injury to start using knee pads.

My junior year in high school, I had to end my season early due to a knee injury which swelled my knee up to the size of a softball. When my doctor told me to stop wrestling for the season, I was actually relieved. Physically, I felt like a car wreck and emotionally I felt like I needed a break from all the training. I was falling apart when I should have been peaking at that stage of the season.

I would have been the perfect candidate for a minimalist strength program during the in-season, but my mindset didn't know or dare to agree to anything less than high-volume and high-frequency training. The minimalist training style would have matched my physical needs perfectly during my last 2 years in high school.

My senior year during wrestling season, about half way in to the season, my knee had once again blown up the size of softball during a wrestling practice. I couldn't stop wrestling again like my junior season, when this was my final season. The doctor said I had to take two weeks to rest my knee before wrestling again.

So, what did I do when I was told to rest?

I went to the local YMCA, and instead of training six days a week in wrestling and running long distances every other night, I trained only every other day. The first thing I did was hit the weight room for about a half hour. This was nothing fancy, as this was the YMCA. If you were training in the 80s and early 90s, you know that YMCAs were actually known as hardcore gyms. In the 60s, they were the places where many top bodybuilders emerged.

Most of these YMCA Gyms housed York isometric racks, old school globe dumbbells, benches, dip bars, and plenty of free weights. Each workout I did included various pushing and pulling for the upper body using both free weights and body weight. I did no direct leg work, so I could rest the knee and of course I didn't know how to work around injuries back then.

After lifting weights, I would go and swim for another half hour. At this stage of the season I was once again in burn out mode and emotionally, after losing so often, I was stressing my body to an even greater degree than normal with my excessive training.

Remember: stress comes in MANY forms, not just from physical exercises/training. Oftentimes the stress from a life event can be more exhausting on the body than the stress of training. In order to reap the rewards of training, proper rest, proper nutrition, and proper mindset must be part of the big picture.

When I came back to wrestling two weeks later as my doctor recommended, I returned feeling energized, stronger, and more motivated to get back on the mat than ever before. I was truly excited to wrestle again. I hadn't felt this type of excitement to wrestle for a while, and it was shocking me.

That forced two-week "rest period" made me feel 20 x better than only a few weeks prior, and I had no clue that my body would respond so well to every other day training. The absence of running during the past 2 weeks actually improved my conditioning. Swimming is less stressful on the joints, and is also therapeutic for the body. The indoor swimming pool is a very hot room, which is much easier on the body than running for distance in freezing temps.

The reason for my lack of energy was that I was walking around over trained throughout the season, beating up my body beyond what I could handle physically and emotionally. My mistake was that I was following the herd, doing what everybody else was doing instead of listening to my body.

Still, even after coming back and feeling better from a smarter training plan, I took a wrong turn one last time. My lack of knowledge and refusal to listen to what my body and mind wanted didn't last long. As soon as my knee started getting better, I stopped swimming, stopped lifting weights, and went back to running every other day with distance runs.

In no time, I felt my conditioning slipping again. I started feeling burnt out, weaker, and emotionally fatigued. My strength was disappearing once again. After the first period of my matches, I felt like I had no strength left. It confused me and angered me once again. My frustration and confusion led to a drop in my confidence.

I learned the hard way what works and what doesn't work, and those painful memories

are what drive me today, to be on a mission, to listen to what every athlete needs, and to help them achieve that success by utilizing auto-regulation and learning as much as I can about their individual needs.

A big mistake that athletes make, especially wrestlers, is that during the in season, they do exactly what I did many, many years ago in the early 1990s. With strength training, it's the old use it or lose it adage. You will not continue to be strong and explosive if you stop training with the very methods that got you strong and explosive in the first place.

The in-season is a time where every athlete must continue their training. It requires a lot of mental discipline because it's very easy to make excuses, get brain washed by others and to tell yourself and tell everybody else that you're too busy to train once or twice a week for an extra 20-30 minutes.

Even if you don't feel like taking a break, every 6 weeks of training should be followed by a week of lighter, less stressful training. If you need to rest before that 6 week period, then listen to your body and do so.

When you take that 7th week to deload, you return stronger, more refreshed, and excited to train hard and heavy again. I found that if you refuse to deload and only wait until you feel like you're exhausted, you've gone too far and end up dealing with injuries and burn out. Give yourself a break and come back better and stronger because of that rest!

Grease The Groove

I have proven through results and experience that time and time again, simple workouts as short as 10, 15, or 20 minutes can produce powerful results during the in-season and off season. And if time is truly of the essence for you, take advantage of the grease the groove method, which is where you perform a few sets a day, 5 - 6 x week, with perfect technique and submax efforts.

Grease The Groove (GTG) works great on bodyweight exercises, kettlebell movements, and lighter barbell lifts. Here is a list of exercises I use GTG with, all with submax efforts, low reps, and perfect technique:

- ✓ Pullups
- ✓ Pushups
- ✓ Rope Climbs
- ✓ Light Deadlifts
- ✓ Handstand Practice / Handstand Push Ups
- ✓ Kettlebell Press or Clean and Press
- ✓ Hanging Leg Raises
- ✓ Ab Wheel Roll Outs

I have experimented more frequently on myself with barbell lifts and GTG in order to teach my body how to be strong without a warm-up, preparing myself for real life situations when you must lift a heavy object without being able to warm-up. This is also a great method for military and law enforcement members who need to be ready for action at all times, most often without any warning, let alone a warm-up.

Here's how you can test GTG: Leave a barbell loaded somewhere in the garage or basement and perform low rep deadlifts several times throughout the week. 1 - 3 reps works great. I use approximately 50% of my 1RM for GTG deadlifts.

I've done this with squats also, using a lower percent of my 1RM, usually 40-50%. Squats without a warm-up don't feel the best on the knees, thus I use a much lower percent of my 1RM. Deadlifts have been my preferred barbell lift using GTG.

The free weight exercises can't be performed as frequently as the bodyweight exercises with GTG, but, like everything, I recommend you test these out and determine what works best for you.

LIFE LESSONS: TRAINING YEAR ROUND

Training year-round teaches critical life lessons. You can benefit whether you're an adult or student athlete, and whether you're training in-season or off-season.

The person who commits to training during the tougher times such as when life is busy is the person who learns to make **NO** excuses in life, thus achieving greater success than those who give up as soon as the going gets tough. The bottom line: Raise your standards. If you're a coach or parent, raise the standards you have for your kids. If you train yourself without the help of others, then push the envelope and go above and beyond the norms.

As a strength coach, I see parents enabling excuses for their kids more often than not. The sports season begins and the athlete gets out of practice later than normal for the first 2 weeks, or the kid complains about staying up late to finish homework or perhaps skips homework altogether. In turn, Mom and Dad immediately make excuses, arguing that little Johnny is too busy to train once a week for a mere 30 minutes.

Really? Do homework in the car, wake up earlier, or stay up later. Get it done and make success happen. Excuses are green lights for accepting failure or mediocre performance. Being average is nothing special, yet countless people are happy with being average.

When Mom and Dad make excuses, they teach their kids to be excuse makers. I've met some extremely busy athletes **AND** adults. I've been there myself, working from 6 am - 1 am on a regular basis back when I was bouncing from teaching to running my gym to operating my online business.

Those who **REALLY** want to achieve success will find a way to train, even if it means short, 15-minute workouts or GTG (Grease The Groove) workouts. In a world where excuses are commonplace, it is actually easier for **YOU** to succeed if you are willing to go the extra inch that the majority of others make excuses about not doing.

The year-round trainee understands the importance of doing the little extras that lead to the big successes, not just in sports but also in life. As I've learned and witnessed with others, training in-season goes beyond merely improving your physical capabilities, but also strengthens your mental and emotional fortitude.

If you're training in season, you can make gains with 1 extra workout per week, averaging 30 minutes per session. If you're extremely busy in life, then go with Grease The Groove workouts. If you have a manual labor job then add bodyweight training to your workouts. Excellence is a choice you make, and it is earned. As soon as you start training like everyone else you will become like everyone else. In the end, where does this get you?

Nowhere. *That's the truth.*

Strong Body, Strong Mind, Strong Character

Nowadays, athletes may be turned off from training when they see that it will require hard work, commitment, intensity, and more. There is more emphasis being placed on speed schools, speed training, running through ladders, first-step quickness, etc. It sounds very appealing to the athlete and the parents. The marketing is attractive and it sounds like the "magic bullet" for a kid and his parents who are attracted by these "shiny objects."

Pulling heavy weights from the ground, carrying heavy objects, and training with heavy weights truly looks like it will require serious work, consistency, and commitment if you are to get any good at it. You are right, indeed. A picture of a heavy deadlift scares people off compared to a picture of someone running on an agility ladder. If something comes easily, it's probably not worth it in the first place.

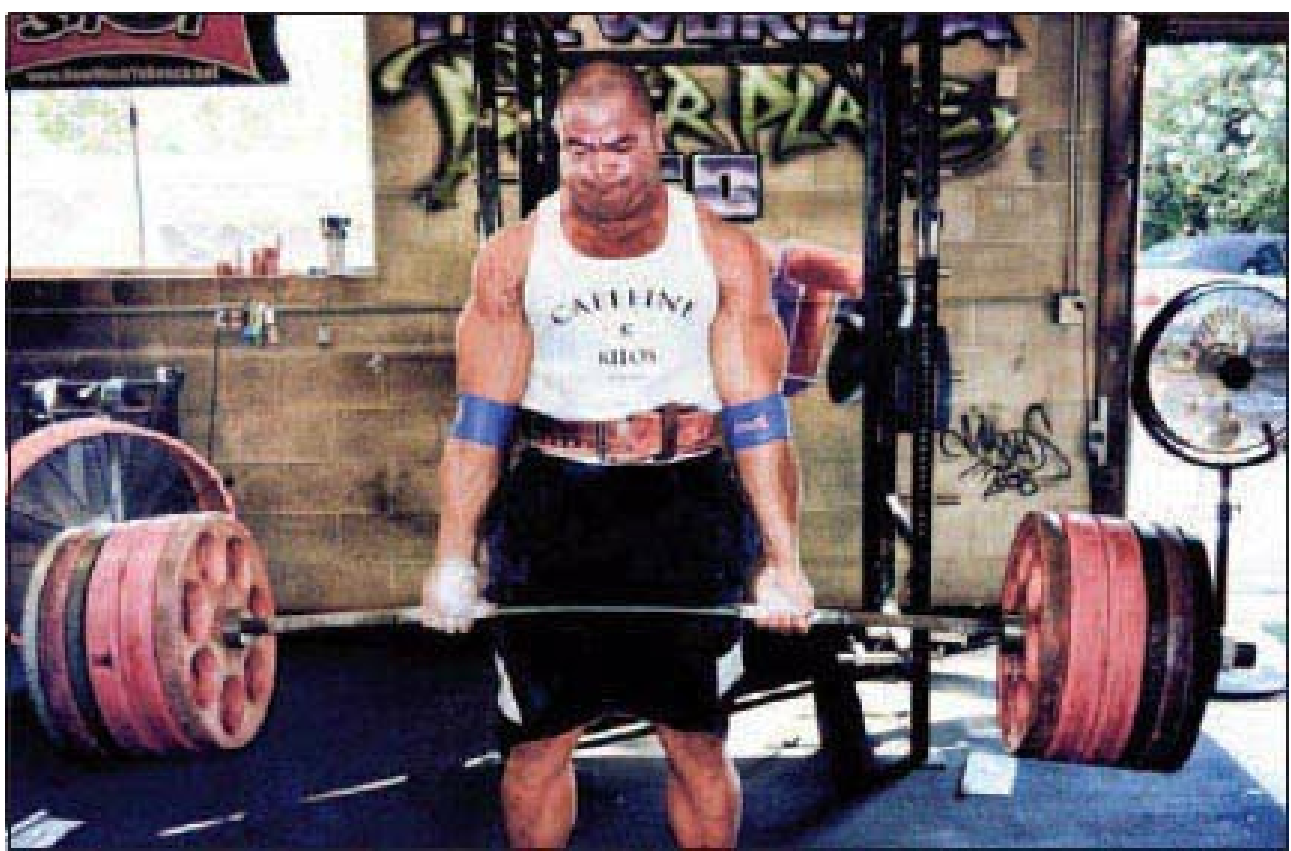
The parents and the coaches who are not educated in the way the body performs and why it performs a certain way quickly become sold on flashy gimmicks and avoid the development of strength & overall athleticism as a distant second.

A prerequisite to developing speed and explosive power is the development of strength. Strength allows you to produce force.

NEVER underestimate the importance of strength. I've worked with athletes who came to us after training at speed and agility schools where the programming neglected their strength development. Most of these athletes could not perform a proper bodyweight squat with the hips back, knees out, back flat, and a deep squat. Performing a proper pushup or even 1 pullup were challenges. They also were NOT fast or explosive at all.

When you train properly for performance, moving weights or your body with maximum speed & control, pushing for greater strength, you develop the speed and explosive power that helps you perform better and ultimately safer. You are less injury-prone. If you are weak, no matter how much foot work you do, no matter how many speed ladder drills you run, you will NOT become fast or explosive. Without a solid foundation of strength, your body produces less speed.

World class powerlifter Mark "Smelly" Bell used this analogy when describing the importance of being strong: "I never heard an MMA fighter say, 'I wish I was weaker so I could have gotten knocked out faster.' I've never heard a football player saying, 'Man, I wish I was weaker so I could have gotten tackled on the field easier.'"



Mark "Smelly" Bell deadlifting in the Super Training Gym.

I agree. Who in their right mind wants to be weaker? The correct answer is NO ONE!

Learning to attack heavy weights requires AND develops mental toughness. You also acquire an added sense of confidence as your strength increases. Confidence is one of the most critical factors for success in both sports and life, especially for a younger athlete who is in the development stages of competing. The added strength and a look of physical prowess is a very powerful advantage for an athlete to have. When you are viewed as imposing by your competition it immediately gets into their head which gives you an added advantage.

While becoming strong should be at the forefront, this is never an excuse to be out of shape and unable to perform sprints and basic conditioning without feeling like you're going to pass out. The goal of these Underground Strength workouts is to develop the optimal blend in performance, as mentioned earlier:

- ✓ Strength
- ✓ Explosive Power
- ✓ Stamina
- ✓ Mental Toughness

✓ Speed

✓ Overall Health



"Strength Is Never A Weakness"

— Mark "Smelly" Bell

Being in top shape doesn't mean your conditioning work should run you into the ground each and every time. An untrained coach will think that crushing you during your workout is THE way for optimal conditioning. Unfortunately, I've seen uneducated parents encourage this "all or nothing" approach of training to coaches, thinking that is how their child will get a "good workout." The uneducated coach, who is easily influenced, utilizes this ridiculous method and considers it "conditioning" and a "good workout."

It's easy to give somebody a brutal workout and make them feel nauseous and have them crawling out of the gym or laying on their back. That type of training doesn't require intelligence, and often leaves athletes overtrained and weaker. On the flip side, it requires knowledge and experience to organize a proper training program that blends all the important training qualities together.

Heavy lifting will train your nervous system to be prepared for all-out efforts, to be prepared to struggle against another imposing object, be it a heavy weight of any sort or an opposition on the athletic field.

You develop a unique mental toughness when you have to face heavy weights when you train. You must learn to face adversity through training to develop the mindset needed to succeed in any endeavor you choose, be it sports or life.

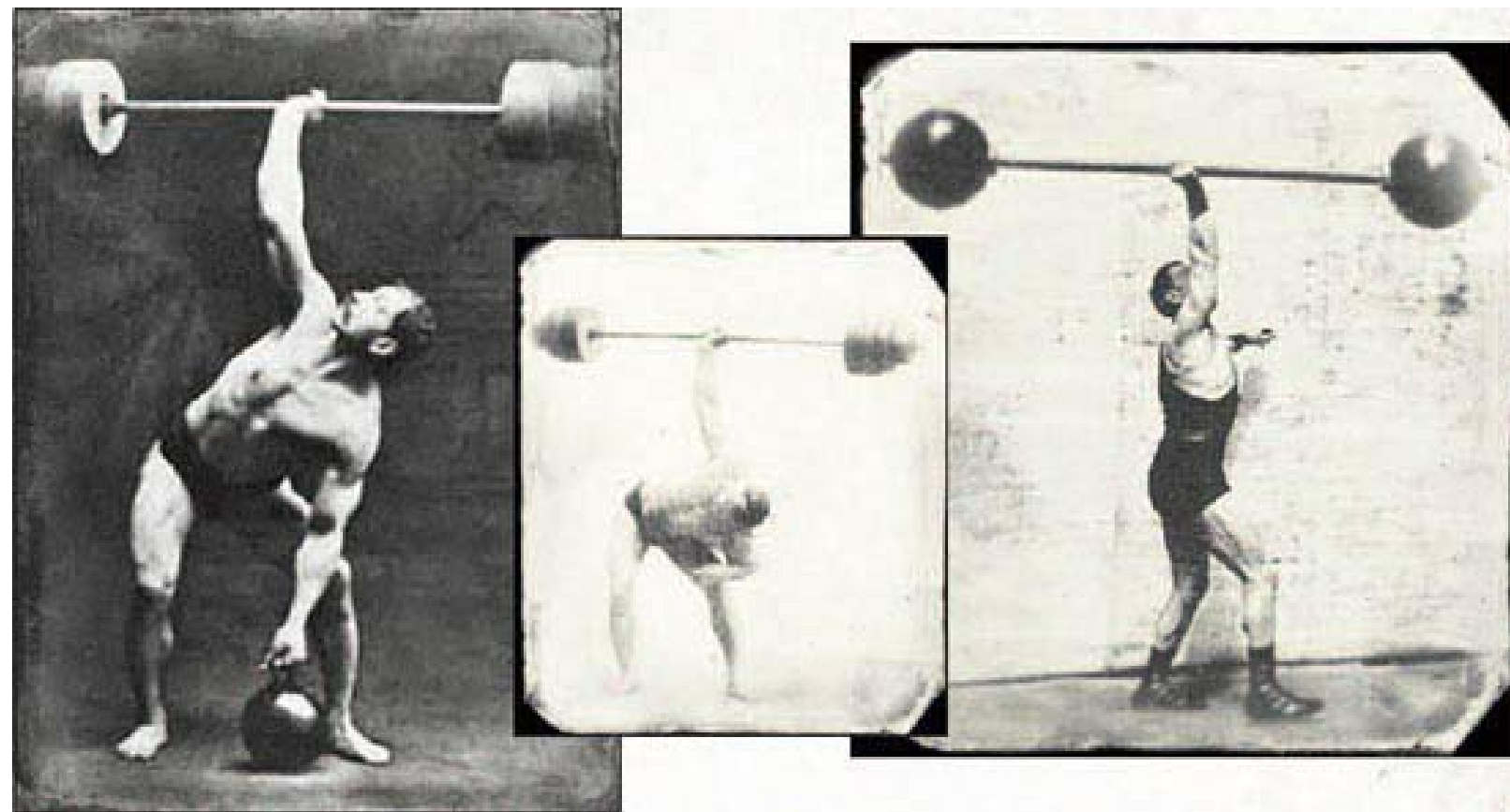
You must learn to build confidence in yourself as you stare down the heavy load, and approach it without questioning yourself if you think you can lift this weight or not. You must KNOW you will lift the weight.

Powerlifters, Olympic weightlifters, and all strength athletes possess high levels of mental toughness because they get used to facing adversity day in and day out in their training. Their confidence carries over to life.

I am often asked my thoughts on using the big 3 (squat, bench, & deadlift) for athletes and always, my answer is YES! As long as they are physically and mentally prepared and coaching is proper, these 3 lifts are excellent for developing strength and speed when used properly.

Back in the day, the standard of testing a man's strength was not "How much ya bench?" It was how much weight a man could clean and press. Looking at photos and reading books from the early 1900s, you see men using dumbbells heavier than most men

of today use with a barbell over their head.

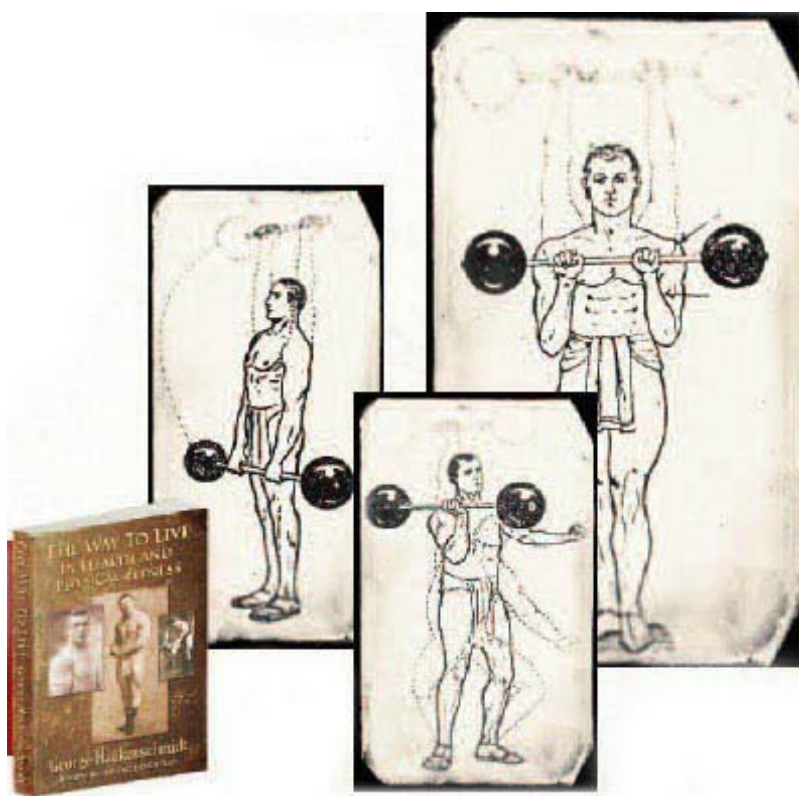


Old time giants like Arthur Saxon considered the overhead press the core of strength conditioning.

The ability to rip a heavy weight from the ground and press it overhead was considered the TRUE test of a man's strength. In addition to the clean and press, you should be able to carry heavy objects through the various farmer walk variations, not just for one set but for multiple sets, showing that your body has durability and endurance of strength beyond one set of low rep ranges or short exertion exercises.

There are standards listed in many web sites regarding how much weight you should aspire to lift in the big 3 lifts. These are common standards:

- ✓ Bench Press: 1.5 x Bodyweight
- ✓ Squat: 2 x Bodyweight
- ✓ Deadlift: 2.5 x Bodyweight



Illustrations from George "The Russian Lion" Hackenschmidt's book *The Way to Live In Strength and Physical Fitness* emphasized the importance of the overhead press.



You should be able to kick up into a handstand against a wall and hold the position with a tight body.

Your focus should be your own progress — slow and steady progress, comparing your gains in strength and performance to yourself. Don't worry about what your friend or training partner can do. This tends to screw up your training program, because you lose sight of self improvement.

A standard that doesn't get much publicity is an overhead press equal to your bodyweight without leg drive. This is simply called the press, but nowadays we must emphasize a strict press, as it is used so rarely. An overhead press equal to your bodyweight is a lofty goal, and one we rarely see. That is some food for thought.

Achieving these goals will require some serious commitment and dedication on your part in the realms of training, eating, nutrition, mindset, and the overall athlete lifestyle. If you already have achieved these goals, then keep climbing and get stronger.

Strength with a barbell is not where your goals should end. I also want to see strength in movements such as the pullup, being able to do various styles of pull ups – at least 10 reps – and eventually being able to climb a rope without the use of your legs.

You should be able to kick up into a handstand against a wall and hold the position with a tight body. You'll eventually work up to performing handstand push ups with a full range of motion against a wall for at least 5 reps.

Other movements such as box or hurdle jumps, prowess using a jump rope, and the ability to perform many variations of bodyweight exercises such as partner hand walking (wheel barrow), plyo pushups, squat jumps, lunge jumps, and various hanging leg raises are a must to improve your athletic performance.

Stay Focused

The confusion over how to train comes when you end up dismissing the basics and copying other strength sports without regard to what you truly need individually. Copying training programs from strength sports such as powerlifting or Olympic weightlifting, and not tweaking their training methods to properly apply them to your own sport or job requirements leaves you only partially prepared for what YOU need.

For example, you might see powerlifters struggling and straining with heavy one-rep max deadlifts from the rack position, heavy one rep max benching off a board, squatting with bands off of a box, etc.

If you're going to copy these exact techniques, you may not be physically or even mentally prepared for such training, but also you are no longer training for your sport; you are training for powerlifting, and you likely do not need to train with such heavy poundages for what you do.

If you start leaving everything you've got in the weight room like many of these advanced lifters do, you won't have an ounce of energy left to practice your sport or perform on your job. Strength sport athletes compete with weights, whereas the rest of us use weights or strength training to improve our performance OUTSIDE of the weight room.

The bottom line is this: The end all, be all is not about how much you lift in the weight room. What ultimately matters is how you perform for your sport/job. Use the methods and tools that take your performance to the top. Don't become sidetracked by copying others. You need what YOU need, not what others need.

One of the most important lessons Coach Ethan Reeve taught me was that he would always have his athletes finish a workout with about 10 percent of their energy left in the tank. This motivated them to come back and want to train again, day after day, month after month and even year after year.

His athletes wanted to get into that weight room and train hard on a regular basis. It also motivated them to do the extra work on their own Coach Reeve called these self-motivated workouts "champion workouts." He didn't really care exactly what they did during these champion workouts, even if that meant they went and did bodybuilding work.

Jim Wendler reminded me to deload after 6 hard weeks of training even if I thought my athletes didn't need a deload. The deload allowed for added recovery and ultimately improved performance.

When you can train without mommy and daddy or a coach hovering over your shoulder telling you what to do, you will build greater confidence in yourself because of the effort and work you've put forth through your own will. That is what champions do. They take

action through their own desire. They don't wait for someone to tell them to get up and go for it!

You will start to realize that you've done the extra work that your competition hasn't done. This confidence leads to improved performance in sport and job-related physical demands. Nowadays, every athlete has a coach for everything and I do mean everything. A strength and conditioning coach. A speed coach. A nutrition coach. A mental and goal setting coach. Before you know it, athletes are unable to think and do for themselves. They stop becoming independent thinkers and they lose motivation to go above and beyond, because they've been trained to never raise a finger unless their coach says so.

This way of training — dependence on others and living by the rules — does not make you stronger. It actually makes you weaker in sports AND life because you lose inner strength. You quickly become a slave to others, and can only act when someone else gives you the answers on a silver platter.

Do yourself a favor. Even if you have a coach, learn to do some form of WORK on your own. Do not get stuck relying on others to tell you how and when to train with no actions from yourself. That type of behavior will lead to a lack of success and a weak mind.

At The Underground, I give athletes the opportunity to train with a coach 3 x week. Beyond that, they must come in on their own and train through their own desire and motivation. I want to help athletes become leaders, not slaves or followers.

General Strength Before Specific Strength

Sports-specific training is the training of your sport skill, which is when you train elements of your sport in your training, such as performing sprints for time periods that match the sprinting and running you do in your sport.

Then we have general physical preparation or GPP, which is mostly what strength & conditioning comprises. You should primarily focus on training movements, not necessarily copying the actual skill of a sport and loading that skill, such as performing throwing motions with band resistance if you're a quarterback or pitcher. The resisted skill training tends to ruin your actual skill and confuses the body. You want to strengthen the muscles used in your sport/job to make it easier for you to perform the specific tasks required.

What you should be doing with your strength and conditioning training is actually quite simple and this is what you'll see outlined through the workouts in this book: Use training methods that strengthen the muscles involved in your sports. Attack weak areas and build your confidence through added strength and improved performance.

You don't need a specialized program that mimics your sports skills using added resistance. In fact, the majority of athletes are not ready for a specialized strength and conditioning program, and will benefit far greater with more GPP exercises to improve their strength, power, and conditioning. This leads to overall greater performance. Before you can perform specialized work you MUST have a high level of "generalized" work.

To improve your skills, practice your skills in their natural settings. A baseball pitcher should use a pitching coach to fine tune his pitching skills. A sprinter should use a running coach to fine tune his running mechanics. Use the workouts to develop your body into a stronger, healthier, more capable machine. Plain and simple.

When I see varsity athletes in high school and D1 athletics coming to my gym on a regular basis, but being unable to perform the basics of a bodyweight squat, push up, pull up, and lunge, I KNOW they have NO reason to be performing anything but the basics.

These general strength and physical preparation methods are what work best for athletes when combined with the practice of the sports skill. The athlete must be smart enough, as well as disciplined enough, to attack their own weak areas and to be careful not to fall in love with their strengths.

I've seen athletes fall in love with the training methods for their sport as I did when I was a wrestler. Unfortunately, back then, off-season wrestling coaching was not readily available as it is today for all sports.

I've seen football players impress me in the weight room but not on the football field, and wrestlers who looked like bodybuilders but got destroyed by a less imposing competitor who was highly skilled.

If an athlete's skill work is not coupled with their strength and conditioning methods, their skills can actually diminish or level off. If you're an athlete and plan to compete and succeed at the higher levels, then your skills must be a priority. I remind myself and other athletes on a regular basis to find that optimal balance of training and skill work.

As an athlete, if you know you need to improve your skill in a certain area of your sport then work on that skill as a priority. If you know that you need to be stronger and more explosive, then focus on developing strength and power when you're in the weight room.

Wanna Be Strong As A House? Build The Foundation

I remember training a high school football player who was a pretty big, strong dude. He loved working the upper body and always left leg training as an afterthought. He was very motivated to train, which was a plus. The downside was he only loved training his strength, which was his upper body.

Every time he came to our gym, when he was done working out, he would stay for extra champion workouts on his own, just as Coach Reeve mentioned. But he never trained his legs. He would always go and do the bench press, dumbbell benching, curls, shoulder raises, etc. He was working his beach muscles.

So I said to him, "Hey man, if you're going to stay extra, you have to start with leg work. You're always working your upper body. You can't even squat 135 pounds all the way down without struggling yet you can bench press more than 225. That should NEVER happen."

Rule of Thumb: Anytime somebody can bench more than they can squat, we've got a problem with priorities. My high school wrestling coach always said, "Your legs are the foundation, and if you want to be as big as a house you gotta build the foundation." He was right.



Squats build the foundation. Rule of Thumb: Anytime somebody can bench more than they can squat, we've

Every time I came across athletes who had a weak foundation, their conditioning and mental toughness was also weak. Tough leg workouts help build mental toughness. A hard set of squats is brutal compared to a hard set of benching. Weak legs don't only hold you back with regard to poor mental toughness; they also cause you to not reach your potential in sport. Movement begins from the feet. Weak legs will hold you back every time.

So, how did we fix this football player's avoidance of leg training?

I started adding back squats with 135 lbs as part of his warm-up during every workout. Every single time he came to the gym, no matter what workout was on the board, he would have to get in three sets of 10 reps of back squats during the warm-up. That was a challenging weight for him. It may not sound like much, but everyone is different and we all have our starting points. It helped his legs grow and get stronger BIG time. Week after week, the progress kept coming.

Little by little his legs started catching up, and eventually surpassed his upper body strength in the bench press. After the warm-up, every workout for this athlete included a form of heavy squats of some sort. This squat would vary between the following:

- ✓ **Box Squats**
- ✓ **Squats Without Box**
- ✓ **Sandbag Squats (Bag placed on back, shoulder or Zercher position)**
- ✓ **Kettlebell Goblet Or Double Kettlebell Squats**
- ✓ **Barbell Zercher Squats**
- ✓ **Low Handle Trap Bar Deadlifts**

Every squat variation would shock his body. His squat technique was typical of a high school football player — too heavy and never more than a half squat. When you squat, you must get your upper thighs to parallel or slightly lower. If you don't squat all the way down that's what we call a "NO Rep!"

In the beginning, when I pushed this football player to do extra credit leg workouts rather than beach muscle workouts, he was crushed physically and mentally. If you've ever trained your legs hard you know what I'm talking about. Intense leg training pushes the entire body like no other muscle group.

He would always run to the bathroom during these squat workouts. His stomach was

killing him & he felt like he had to constantly throw up or go to the bathroom. His nervous system was in shock from the side effect of intense squats, sled drags, and lunges. He never felt this way from his beach muscle workouts, that's for sure!

When you squat, deadlift, and drag heavy sleds, it has a totally different effect on your nervous system compared to bench pressing and curling. The bench press is still a great movement. Curling? Sure, we do curls —heavy cheat curls to simulate a hang clean and with an underhand grip. The bottom line: You wanna be as big as a house? Build the foundation!

If It's Weak, Attack It!

We look at any muscle that is a weak link in the body. If that muscle hinders your strength we attack that muscle. If we need to strengthen the biceps to help you improve your pull ups, we will do it. Weak triceps making it hard for you to bang out pushups? Prepare to do high rep band pushdowns at the end of every workout. Can't squat properly because of weak legs? We'll hit sled drags before AND after each workout.

Remember, if you've got a weak area, attack that weak area and turn it into a strong point. You can add the extra weak point training to your warm-up as well as performing grease the groove workouts on your own. Grease The Groove has proven to be extremely powerful for all the athletes we train.

I've been using GTG on my pushups with great success since I was in seventh grade, when I was getting my butt kicked in every arm wrestling match. It motivated me to do several sets of pushups throughout my day, every day. Grease The Groove helps with gaining strength and gaining muscle. Strength is a skill; practice it.

You can perform Grease The Groove not just with strength training methods such as improving your pullups, the bench press, the deadlift, climbing rope, and so on. You can also use Grease The Groove to practice skill work in your sport when you are fresh.

One of the biggest reasons for our success with the Underground Strength methods and with the athletes I train is that I have pushed to keep these athletes at a high level of work capacity and overall fitness year round. This helps them remain strong through the sports season while the competition gets fatigued and injured. There is a big mental aspect to this, as it boosts confidence greatly knowing that you feel strong during the end of the season while you hear others talking about how tired they always are. As George Hackenschmidt said, "Health can never be divorced from strength." Feeling aches and pains from incorrect training drains you physically and emotionally.

Implementing training methods that do not take on a singular focus, such as only speed training or only strength training or only conditioning, has allowed this training system to build athletes that are more durable in mind and body compared to their competition. The greater your fitness level is, the faster you can recover from your workouts, thus staying motivated to train consistently on a year round basis, while also reducing your injuries and improving overall athleticism.

Recovery

Using auto-regulation instead of a rigid program design method with deloading periods every 6 - 8 weeks has been the glue that holds everything together. There should be no confusion between using auto-regulation and being lazy. When you auto-regulate workouts, you must be able to identify the difference between feeling run down, beat up, and training lighter that day, versus being lazy and making excuses as to why you should not train on that particular day.

The body and mind must be in the right place if you to want to train hard and have a successful, goal-oriented training session. A good number of my injuries came about when my mind and body were not in agreement with one another. My body was fatigued, but my wrestling mindset was shouting, "Train hard, be a warrior, don't back down!!" I was too stubborn to listen to my body in my teens, twenties, and even my early 30s. Don't make the same mistakes I've made.

On the flip side, some people are lazy, so they will always have excuses for lack of training intensity or lack of training altogether. Auto-regulation is to be used in an honest manner. Only you truly know how good or run down you feel, so train accordingly and give it your honest to best effort, all the time.

Auto-regulation with my athletes differs depending on the age of the athlete as well as their experience in training. Our new high school athletes will get different programming than our experienced high school athletes. Our college athletes will be trained differently than our adults. Their ability to recover changes as they get older, as more stress is introduced into their lives, and as the competition gets more intense.

THE ART OF COACHING

I am always communicating with my athletes before, during, and after each training session. Our communication is not just verbal, but also non-verbal as I watch their facial expressions, posture, and energy levels throughout the entire workout. This guides me through each training session, as well as future training sessions.

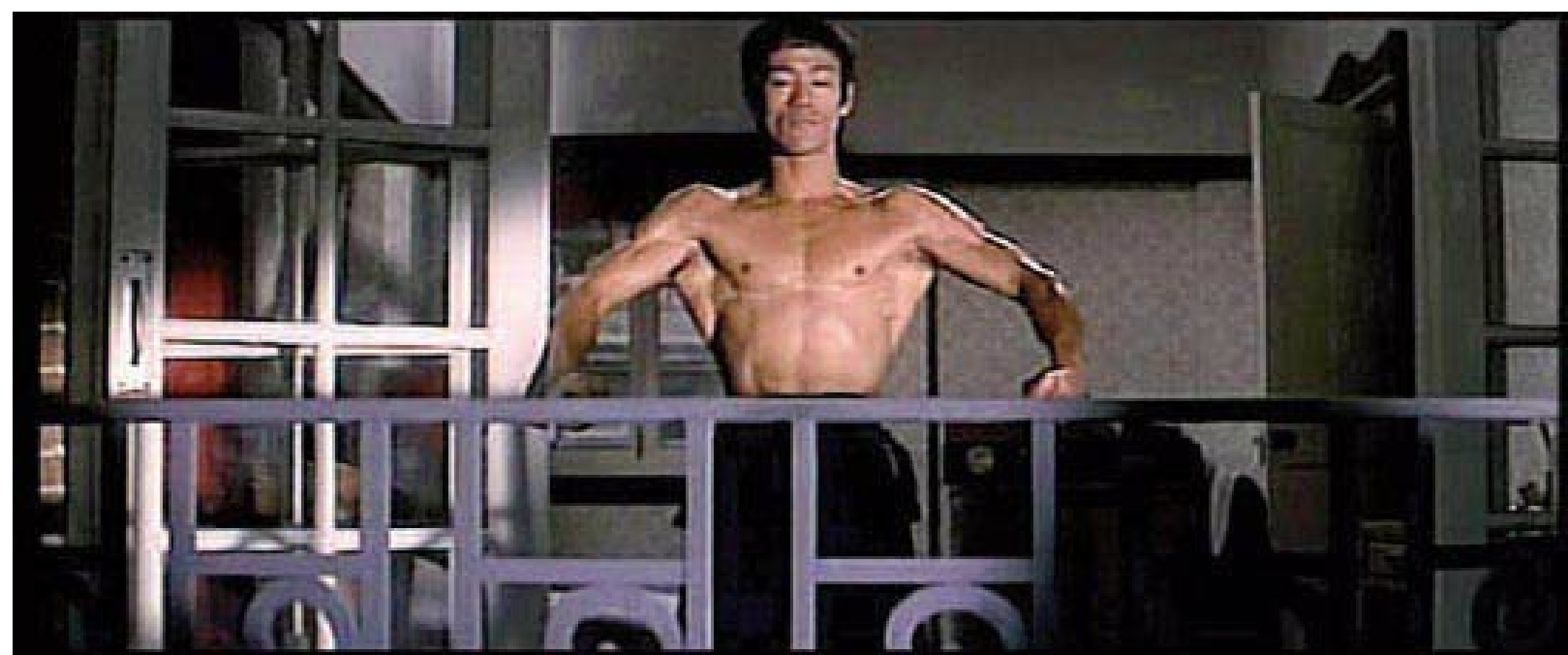
I assess their performance and determine how the training will go that specific day, the next session, and even the next training cycle. Auto-regulation and the art of coaching is for everyone. If you think you're not an athlete anymore because you're no longer competing in sports or because you're above a certain age, then you need to change your attitude, raise your own standards, and give yourself more credit. Don't put limits on yourself and even more so, don't allow others to tell you what you are or aren't capable of doing. Negative people thrive on bringing others down to their own level. Make sure you cut negative people out of your life, no matter how close they are to you. Let no one stand in your way when it comes to conquering obstacles and achieving goals.

Regardless of your age, training for improved performance and better health should always be your goal. All the people I train, from the youth to the adults, are considered athletes. Age is irrelevant.

Age and experience are certainly taken into account when I train people, allowing me to be flexible with their training intensity. The point you always want to avoid is hitting a wall with your training, where you are forced to back off and rest or even worse, being forced to back off due to injury. The smartest way to avoid hitting a wall is through the use of auto-regulation and deloading your training every 6 - 8 weeks. A beginner and intermediate can actually train longer without a deload than an advanced lifter can handle.

When you deload, some basic guidelines on my end are to avoid spinal loading exercises such as squatting and deadlifting. As mentioned before and through my stories of the various athletes I've worked with, don't be afraid to individualize workouts if the athlete responds better to a certain method that others don't respond well to.

For example, let's look back at our baseball player who thrived on heavy squatting, heavy deadlifts, and heavy farmer walks during the baseball season. That would likely not be something that you would find recommended in an exercise journal. If I was going to go purely by the exercise science journals, I never would have listened to this athlete when he expressed his desire to lift heavy and hard. I would have gone by the books 100%, which isn't always the way to go.



"Absorb what is useful, discard what is not, add what is uniquely your own."

— Bruce Lee

The more experience you gain in training, the more you will learn to remove the unnecessary movements, very likely sticking to the basic lifts and movement patterns. You will notice that you've come full circle as you get more advanced in training, going back and focusing more and more on the basics. The exercises and movements that don't generate results will get tossed out, and the basics will always remain superior at producing results.

Through experience, you will understand how to tweak science so that it works best for you or those that you train. Experience will prove to be your best teacher, and if you feel like something is out of your scope, then always refer out and learn from other experts. For example, through the past few years the words prehab, rehab, and corrective exercise have become commonplace among strength and conditioning coaches.

When I have spoke to some of the top physical therapists in the country who are also consultants to strength coaches, they all have emphasized that many of these little imbalances that we agonize over today were actually there years ago, except we are more knowledgeable now. Now that we have more knowledge, we recognize imbalances more and oftentimes give them too much concern, putting fear into training aggressively.

Unfortunately, many coaches are becoming paranoid and nervous over these little

imbalances that may have been there since day one. The coaches fear that if somebody's feet can't point straight ahead, or if someone has tight hamstrings, etc. then these people can't squat, can't deadlift, etc. It's a paranoid way of thinking that will stop you from helping others get stronger. You can also improve those imbalances through the development of strength.

These little imbalances in everybody's body are not necessarily going to send them to the hospital or stop them from moving. That's not an excuse for you not to learn about how to use prehab or corrective exercises; they are extremely important, and as coaches we must constantly pursue greater knowledge and excellence. If something you learn can help somebody's performance, you learn about that area as much as you can. In a world of marketing hype, where business coaches tell strength coaches they don't need to learn more about training, I disagree. You must constantly increase your training wisdom.

Remember, sports and life are very uncertain; there are NO absolutes, so if your training is always set in the perfect world, under perfect circumstances, then you will not be preparing yourself to be ready to perform at high levels in the real world.

"Recognize that every training program is going to be flawed."

— Buddy Morris

No matter how perfectly a training program is organized, there will always be flaws. Buddy Morris told me that a long time ago and it hit home for me. Once again, that is not an excuse to allow your training to stagnate or for you to stop learning. Your goal is to create workouts or a training plan that are as safe and effective as possible. Don't get overly consumed with small flaws in a workout or small flaws in the way an athlete moves. Don't get freaked out by not having a perfectly equal amount of time spent balancing strength, power, conditioning, muscle building, etc. More often than not, you will have more focus on one trait than the other. That is the art of training, and you will make adjustments for your next workout.

Progress, Not Perfection

In a nutshell, do not let imperfect mobility, imperfect movement patterns, & imperfect flexibility stop you from training hard. Stop waiting for the moon and sun to align before you can squat or perform the clean and press. If I personally can't identify the problem that needs to be solved, I connect with an expert in that field and learn how to solve that problem. Although I am a coach, first and foremost I am a student!

When other people look at my training methods, or maybe they hear about the training system but don't truly know the details, they get worked up because I talk about pushing beyond the science and going beyond the "normal" boundaries. I emphasize that others should blend science with some hellish training in order to develop mental toughness, not just physical prowess. You can never reach your true physical potential unless you push the envelope every once in a while to test what you're truly made of. Strength in your mind and body is just one layer. Developing a strong spirit is another layer, and will take more time to develop. It is a constant evolution.

Special Strengths

One of the key aspects that I utilize science in is the development of the various special strengths that I favor when training athletes: strength endurance, speed strength, explosive power, and power endurance. These methods were first introduced to me by Louie Simmons of Westside Barbell Club. When Louie introduced me to performing high volume sets, short rest periods, and low reps I was shocked at how powerful the results were. They were everything I wished I had back when I was competing as a wrestler. Rather than using the typical 3×10 or even 5×5 , these methods were not only powerful for performance but also for building muscle.

This doesn't mean we don't use 5×5 or 3×10 . We certainly do, but in the development of special strengths, the sets and reps look different than the norm.

Strength endurance is the ability to maintain strength for extended periods of time. Speed strength is the ability to move heavy weights explosively, this is also know as power. Remember when I spoke about being big and useless? Power is the exact opposite.

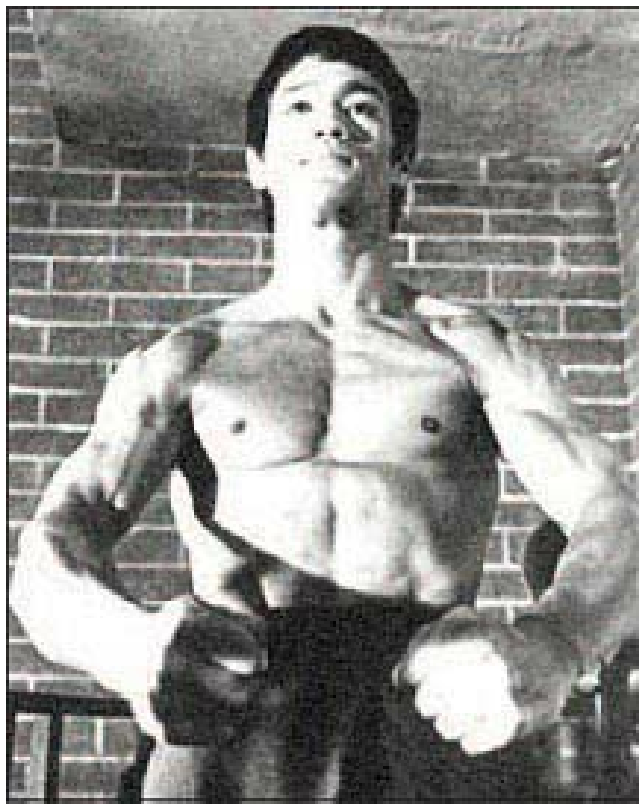
I like to break things down into layman's terms. I view power as overall athleticism. An athletic body has strength and the ability to use the strength for extended periods of time, with speed and with agility, and with high levels of coordination.

You want to be able to move heavy weights at fast speeds; this is what leads to greater performance. Explosive power is the ability to move extremely fast from the onset of your movement, be it your own body or moving against an external load. Power endurance is the ability to maintain speed and explosiveness for extended periods of time.

These special strengths give great advantages to athletes and those who work in military and law enforcement. When most are feeling exhausted and their bodies are shutting down, the person who has trained for developing special strengths is still performing at a high level and ultimately emerges with the upper hand.

The development of special strengths is where I spent time researching and tweaking science. But, when developing conditioning and toughness in an individual, these are the times where I utilize "No Rules" workouts to not just develop the body but to develop the mind and the spirit. This teaches athletes how to break through self imposed limitations and tough times.

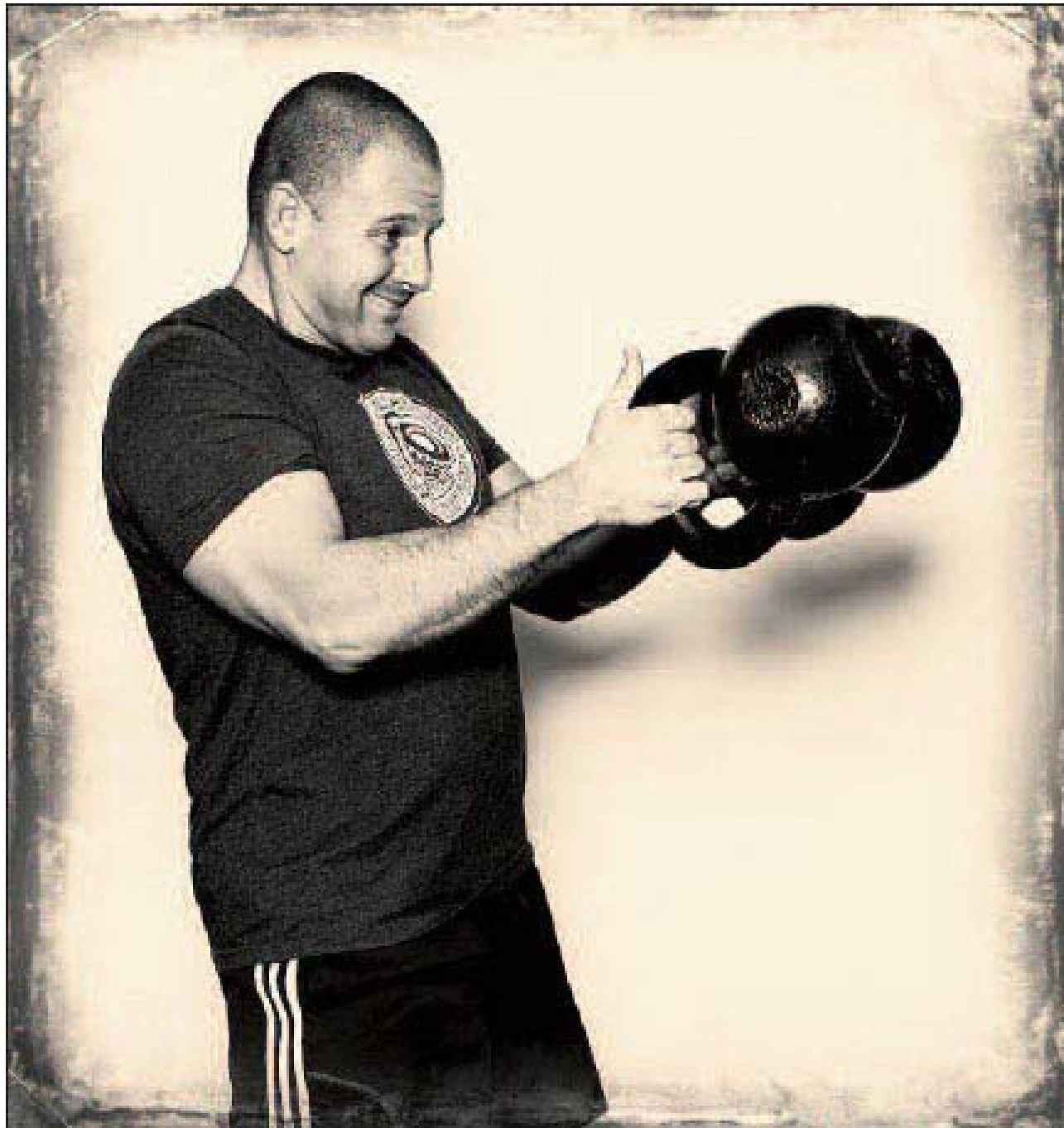
In a traditional circuit for the development of endurance, you will see a series of exercises working the entire body, usually in the 8 - 12 rep range per exercise using traditional body-weight and free weight exercises. These circuits are great, and I use them as well. But there is something about going outside these norms that helps develop the mind and body simultaneously.



"If you always put limits on everything you do, physical or anything else. It will spread into your work and into your life. There are no limits. There are only plateaus, and you must not stay there, you must go beyond them."

— Bruce Lee

When training to become a top-notch athlete or to achieve your own best potential in performance, it is critical that you remove the fear of breaking the rules you read about in scientific textbooks and journals. Training your mind is of equal importance — if not more important—to developing a tough body. You can break the rules of training and still train smart.



The key to enabling you to move weights explosively and under good control is to avoid training with poundages and high percentages that are not suitable for your level of training.

As the warm-ups progress into our working sets, we begin pushing for maximum speed on our exercises without sacrificing technique. Whether that's a body-weight exercise or a free weight exercise, the exercise always has to be under control, and only then do we focus on moving explosively.

The key to enabling you to move weights explosively and under good control is to avoid training with poundages and high percentages that are not suitable for your level of training. On our heavy sets, more often than not I prefer to be in the 3 - 5 rep range, sometimes 2 reps, which is usually somewhere around 75 to 85 percent of the one rep max. Our advanced lifters can handle the higher percentages safely.

I am not locked into saying, "Hey you have to go by this exact percent of your 1 rep max" because of the use of auto regulation. Our effort is based on day to day energy levels.

As you know, your energy and stress levels will vary from day to day so giving yourself flexibility rather than being stuck in a rigid percent range of your 1 rep max is going to be critical to your success and long term health.

What I often do on our heavy lifts is advise the athlete to leave 1 or 2 reps in the tank. Leaving some energy in the tank on those main lifts such as the squat, the bench press, the power clean, and the deadlift help keep progress steady and regular. When you start creeping close to maximum muscular fatigue and 95% or more of your 1 rep max, that is when technique deteriorates and your chances of getting injured increase, especially for beginners and intermediates. Even advanced lifters will find they will make steady progress without killing themselves on their main lift.

If you want to push for higher intensity during your workout, this is best applied to other movements that have less of a risk factor associated with them such as bodyweight exercises, dumbbell exercises, high rep kettlebell movements, heavy sled work, etc. These movements are safer than barbell movements when taken to higher levels of intensity and fatigue unless you are a highly advanced lifter.

Jump Training And Explosiveness

When I trained athletes outdoors and in my garage we were able to use jump training in various ways:

🔑 *They performed box jumps on top of picnic tables or park benches. They bounded across open field of grass. They did broad jumps up grass hills or flights of stairs. They performed hops up stairs.*

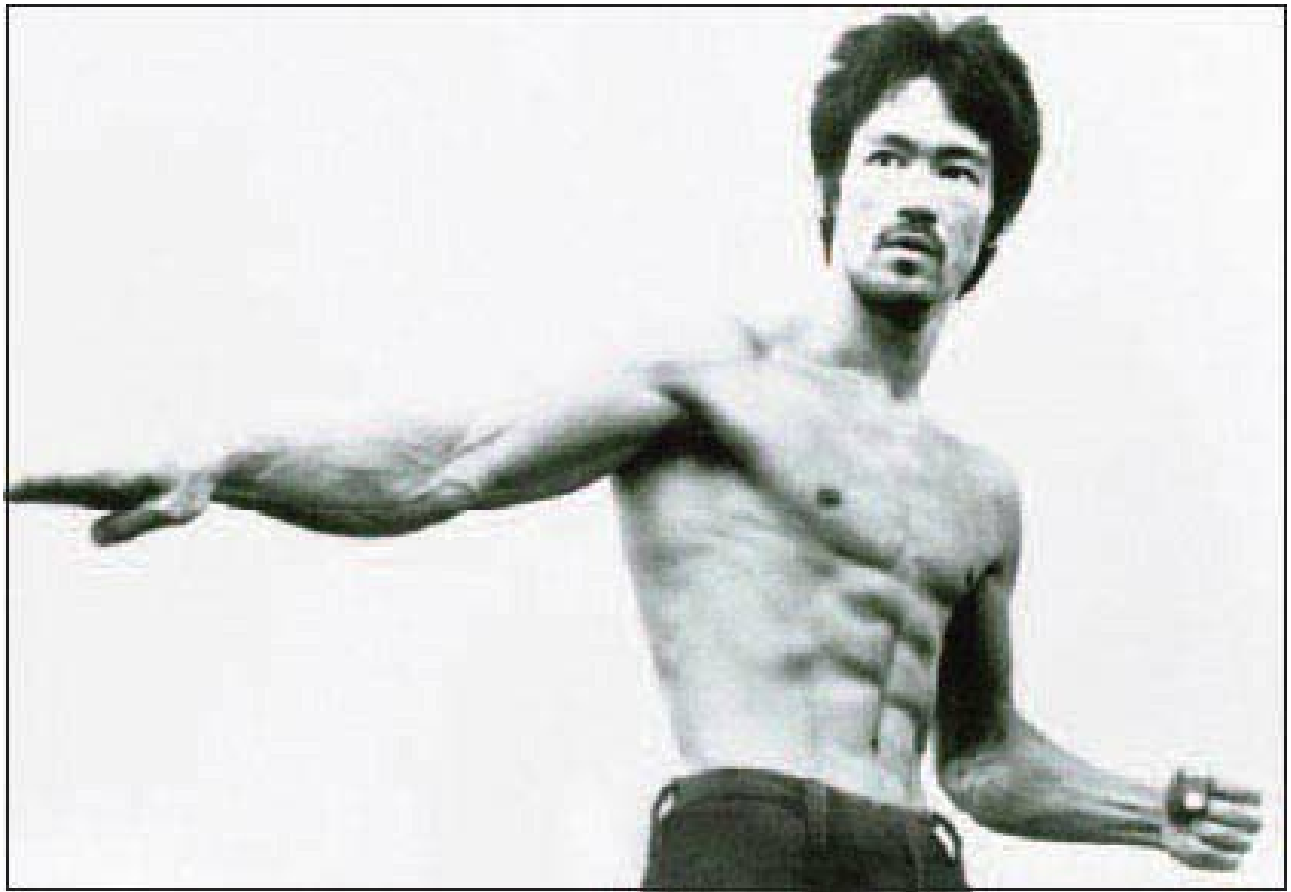
Once The Underground was moved into a garage and I had higher ceilings, I began implementing more varied jump training methods both indoors and outdoors. The more I included jump training into our workouts, the more athletically and the more explosively I saw these athletes performing. Try it and you'll experience the same. You can jump on lower and upper body days, early in a workout when fresh or later in a workout when more fatigued. Anywhere from 10-20 jumps are performed during each workout. The style of jumps depends on the experience of the athlete.

The mixed jumping movements allow you to train the body to be well prepared in as many circumstances as possible. I've seen athletes and coaches limit themselves to box jumps and nothing else. I like to use hurdles, benches, boxes, tires, stairs, and hills for jumping. We jump from various starting positions as well as adding more variety by adding resistance to our jumps

If you are an athlete, there are times when you're going to need explosive power when your body is fatigued, and because of that, you should train the body to be explosive at ALL times. You often hear about performing your power movements first in a workout, but to match the demands of your goals, it is likely you'll need to practice jumps after heavy lifting or even coupled with a heavy exercise.

Think outside the box when training and find ways to make your body prepared to perform above the norms. That's how I look at the training of all athletes and individuals. I want to prepare them for circumstances that are less than optimal because as mentioned earlier, life and sport are both uncertain, there are no absolutes.

Sometimes our jumps are before the heavy lifting gets started, and other times jumps are performed after the heavy lifting, which requires more muscle fiber recruitment. We jump over objects and on top of objects, and also rebound jump from one object to another, sometimes with varied heights. We jump using 2 feet as well as one legged jumps. Some jumps are straight ahead, and others involve turning while jumping. Some jumps we begin from the feet, while other jumps we begin while seated on a box or from our knees. Some jumps are performed with bodyweight, other jumps holding dumbbells and/or wearing a weight vest, ankle weights or resistance bands.



**"Knowing is not enough, we must apply.
Willing is not enough, we must do."**

— Bruce Lee

Implementing Mini Cycles In Your Training

Utilizing mini cycles in your training allows you to improve your skill and strength in a lift. Strength is a skill. Varying your workout too frequently has its drawbacks. Using mini cycles allows you to measure back and see your progress.

Mini cycles can last anywhere from 2 - 4 weeks; the length of time depends on your experience level. Someone new to training can continue a mini cycle with little to no variety and consistently grow stronger. An intermediate needs some variety, and an advanced lifter will need the most variety.

I often prescribe mini cycles with a percent for athletes to follow, starting at a lighter percentage and each week increasing by 5%. On the 4th week, you back off and begin again using the same percent as week # 2. Throughout your mini cycle your strength and skill improve in a slow and steady manner.

One of my favorite methods for utilizing mini cycles is influenced by Jim Wendler's 5 / 3 / 1 method. In a nutshell, you increase your weight each week while decreasing the reps. On the 4th week you back off slightly to deload, and then on week 5 you're back at it, increasing weights and decreasing reps using the 5, 3, 1 rep pattern.

Jim's method is simple and effective, and easily applied to the squat, bench, deadlift, and military press. We couple Jim's system with explosive jump training, kettlebells, bodyweight, odd objects, and various conditioning methods.

Here is how I view each training week beyond just sets, reps, and weight:

Week one is an introduction, or a reintroduction for our more experienced lifters, to the movements. This is a time to establish or reestablish technique and to establish a baseline of how strong you are.

Week two you try to break records and move more weight than you did during week one.

Week three, once again, you try to break records from what you did during week two.

Week four, use lighter weights and moderate reps allowing you to recover and come back fresh to lift heavy again on week 5.

If you're an advanced lifter and feel the need for added variety, here are some of the things you can do during this 3 week mini cycle:

Change the equipment, yet use the same movement. For example, we might perform a back squat using a straight bar for three weeks and then the next three weeks we might use a sandbag placed in the crook of the arms in the Zercher position.

Then, the next three weeks we might do box squats while using a safety squat bar.

So in essence, we use the same movement during each new training cycle (squats), but we change the exercise (the type of squat). This allows you to continue squatting and to continue getting strong in the squat without getting bored of performing the same style of squats (or any exercise you choose) over and over again.

In the example given, the movement is squats, but rather than use a straight bar for weeks or even months on end, you simply change the style of that movement with a different variation. Our more advanced lifters will change the bar or training tool used almost every workout if they are eccentric and thrive off change and variety.

To add variety we will use various training tools, different barbells, sandbags in different positions, one kettlebell or two kettlebells, change the position of the body by varying the foot stance or hand positioning, etc. As you can see, the variety can come not just from switching the implement used but also by switching the position of the body. Athletes are more often than not quite eccentric, thus, they thrive on variety. An advanced lifter more often than not has a passion for the basics and doesn't feel the urge to look for changes beyond the basics. Change isn't a bad thing, but when training athletes we must find a happy medium between keeping them excited to train with the focus of course being on getting them results! Gotta get stronger or it doesn't count!

Here is an example of how we can easily come up with variety for the most basic of all movements, the Squat:

- ✓ Back Squat
- ✓ Box Squat
- ✓ Wide Stance Box Squat
- ✓ Lower the Box Height for Box Squats
- ✓ Different Barbell for Squats
- ✓ Sandbag Squats (on shoulder, back or Zercher position)
- ✓ Kettlebell Goblet Squat
- ✓ Double Kettlebell Squat
- ✓ Jump Squats (bodyweight or with light barbell)
- ✓ Kettlebell Jump Squats (kettlebells held at side or sumo position)

As you can see from the above variations, it is easy to keep challenging the body if you

open your mind up to the many variations available with each movement. Never let your body get used to a training program or a specific movement. Adaptation means getting comfortable, and once your body gets comfortable, it slows down progress in strength and muscle gains.

GET COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE

There's mental toughness and then there's beyond mental toughness, or some might call this your inner warrior spirit. This is when you dig deeper beyond the physical and beyond the mental and find out what you're truly made of. It's amazing what the body is capable of doing. Some will quit when they reach a certain point and some will push through when they are challenged at these deeper levels.

What might be a challenge for you might be a walk in the park for someone else. Don't worry about anyone else; focus on YOU. To achieve this level of going beyond mental toughness, you will be pushing the envelope. These workouts are NOT approved by the exercise science community. These are training sessions that go far beyond what most see as a beneficial. That's the key factor. These methods are not for "most people."

These are the tough, brutal training sessions that we will use to train your mind. Eventually, the mind breaks down and you discover how to call upon your inner warrior spirit to go beyond merely being mentally tough. These hellish workouts teach you how to overcome the adversity and obstacles which happen during intense competition and in life. Some people shut down during high stress periods in training or life, while others can rise to the occasion and emerge the victor. This mental toughness will take time for you to develop.

My journey began freshman year in high school as a wrestler, at age 14, and I didn't understand how to get to this level until I was 36, some 22 years later! Hopefully you won't have to go through such a long journey. The speed at which you progress is dependent on you, and how willing you are to take action and discover what you're truly made of.



There will be different rates of progression and different starting points for all of us. For example, if you always train for 30 minutes on average, start adding an extra 15 minute finisher once a week, and start pushing the envelope.

If you always train for an hour, get MORE work done in that hour to make your workout more intense. Finish in 45 minutes or less, while also adding a new element to your training.

Get OUT of your common routine on a regular basis and you will start developing a toughness that you never knew you had. When the mind and body want to stop, your inner warrior spirit will learn to take over IF you attach a deep meaning to training so intensely. You can't develop this extreme mental toughness through normal workouts. You're gonna have to go through some brutal training sessions on more than a fair occasion to discover what you're made of.

When I began this journey, I was preparing for a Navy SEAL challenge — completely unfamiliar terrain to me. All I knew were my weak areas. I began doing the things I sucked at, such as running distances, both on the road and on the sand. I began utilizing high rep circuits for time periods of 20 - 30 minutes, whereas before I would do much shorter conditioning workouts. Some workouts, I would begin with a long run with a 30 lb ruck sack on and then hit my workout so I would begin my training already fatigued, both physically and mentally. Every time I stopped running, I would drop and do squats and pushups. I would then carry the bag over my head, perform thrusters, walking lunges, and more.

After training with a ruck for 30-45 minutes, I would then begin my “normal” workout, even though I was already fatigued. I would push the pace and push to keep my strength high, even after I had already completed a long distance run with the ruck sack.

In training, once you have trained your mind to overcome obstacles and to never quit no matter how tough things get, you will find success goes beyond the gym walls. If you’re a coach, then this style of training is something you will have to use your own best judgment with. You’ll have to weigh when to use it, how often to use it, and with whom to use the workout.

I am sure you’ve noticed that there are some athletes who might show up extremely gifted and talented in skill. They might be very strong, very explosive, & highly conditioned, but mentally they might crumble under challenging situations. They might give up when they face an equally skilled competitor, or quit altogether when the pressure is based largely on their shoulders to perform at a high level. These athletes will need to develop mental toughness as much as the next guy. Talent will only take you so far.



A parent once insisted to me that his son begin training with our groups with NO introductory period. I always begin new athletes at my gym with an introductory period to not only teach them the skills of the basic movements we favor, but also to let their minds and bodies adapt to the intensity we use with our training. No matter how strong you look or how strong you say you are, I begin with an introductory period. But this dad insisted otherwise, much to my dismay.

His son was built like a brick shit house. In shorts and a tank top, he was impressive looking. Even the athletes looked at him with envy, and I could tell they were intimidated by his chiseled muscles. I knew better though, as I had seen and even experienced it myself — looking strong is one thing, yet being physically and mentally prepared to handle a workout that required more than gym strength is an entirely different ball game.

Our athletes wound up crushing this older athlete during that training session. Although he looked stronger and more muscular than our athletes, his performance was not on the same level, not even close. For this athlete, this workout was a shock to his nervous

system. For our trained athletes, it was another day at the office, as they had regular experience in being pushed the way we normally train.

That training session was a mix of bodyweight training, powerlifting, sandbag training, and sled work. This football player was not used to the odd objects or training for strength endurance and power endurance. His normal routine was a typical globo gym program, doing a set and resting, following all the traditional lifts: benching, curling, leg presses, and the like. He was "gym strong" when he showed up. My goal, as always, was to help him develop the unique type of strength that carries onto the football field. In a few short weeks, he turned the corner mentally and physically. Training with us 3 x week he was able to make fast progress. His confidence grew along with his ability to stay strong through these intense workouts. I love when I get to see these transformations, because I know this is the training that breeds success and toughness beyond gym walls.



I have seen the opposite though, where the athlete is close minded and hates being pushed out of his comfort zone. He refuses to change his "gym strong" training program, and would rather look strong than be strong. The blow to the ego of being crushed from a workout is embarrassing, so an athlete continues his traditional training regime without getting uncomfortable.

The athletes who refuse to change and don't want to push themselves to the next level taught me this: If you crumble under stress during training, you will crumble under stress during competition or job requirements. It's almost a guarantee. As the famous military quote says....



"The More You Sweat In Training, The Less You Bleed In Battle."

— Navy SEAL Quote

An athlete like the football player I just described would benefit greatly from a blend of science and hell. He had the body, but needed more of the mind to get to that next level in football. You've likely seen these athletes yourself or maybe this type of athlete is similar to you. I know that was me - look like Tarzan but played like Jane!

You might look strong and you likely are strong — gym strong, that is. Getting out of your globo gym comfort zone works your weak areas — areas you likely already know about. If you already know you have weaknesses, then it's time for you to implement these methods to get away from the traditional exercises that allow you to lay down under a machine, sit down instead of standing and time for you to attack more ground based lifts and odd objects.

As always, be smart when using these challenging workouts to push yourself out of your comfort zone. Take one workout too far and it will beat up your body to a point that you have to spend more time recovering than you can in training. Gradually build yourself up to the challenges and avoid abusing and overusing these methods. If you're a coach, understand that not all athletes will take the benefits of these workouts and run with them. Some athletes simply get sick of working hard. I've seen wrestlers get sick of wrestling and quit the sport midway through high school, or want nothing to do with the sport when college rolls around. These are mysteries of the mind that I can personally not explain, as everyone is different.

The one factor I do see is that if anything is taken too far, some will break down and others will break through.

I trained a high school football player for several years. He started out with the eye of the tiger and truly became an intense and dedicated athlete. I was proud of his efforts, and his progress was inspiring to all of our athletes. But as he became one of the stronger guys in the gym and on his football team, he lost that eye of the tiger. His teammates looked up to him, and his star status wound up working against him. He hit a mental wall that we couldn't pull him out of.

He began to routinely show up for his scheduled workouts with us AFTER the warm-up. He would purposely arrive 20 minutes past the hour and tell us, "I just finished lifting at school. I'm warmed up can I jump in?"

At first I let it slide, until his Dad told us he was going home first, sitting around and leaving late to head to our gym each time. I quickly learned why he would show up late. Our warm-up was not enjoyable to him, not just physically, but for his ego as well. He could lift heavier than the lighter athletes, naturally, but the warm-up made him entirely too uncomfortable. He wanted to avoid little things like bear crawls and crab walks.

He was a star on his football team, but among the big competitors in the area, he was not a star. His work ethic dwindled, as he was a big fish in a small pond until it was time

to move on to the college level. He thought he was D1 material but he wasn't. He wasn't big enough, strong enough, or skilled enough. The moral of this story is that you must always keep your eye of the tiger, never lose your edge, and never think you are good enough — for whatever it is that you do, there is always room for improvement.

As you'll see in our section on bodyweight exercises, the warm-up itself is quite challenging at first. But you will quickly build up your work capacity and mental toughness, and it will not fatigue you. I've used the warm-up as an assessment tool, as well as a gauge as to who will quit and who will push through and get comfortable being uncomfortable.

Testing Your Strength

It was the perfect summer day with temps in the mid 80s, and the sun was shining. I had just finished running a strength & conditioning camp for various high school athletes. At the end of the day I wanted to get in some heavy deadlifts, and the high school had a dungeon of a weight room, just my style: old York plates, old York globe dumbbells, and a squat cage from the 80s in the back of the room. I went in to train while the football team was training, and they started scaring the living daylight out of me from the get go.

I saw a group of skinny kids squatting nearly 300 lbs and damn near killing themselves. Spotters were on each side with one spotter behind, all 3 spotters screaming at the top of their lungs trying to motivate the kid squatting. A large towel was wrapped around the bar to protect the football player's skinny, untrained neck. A bungee chord was wrapped on the squat rack, set at the half squat point to signify the proper squat depth. The kid unracked the weight, wobbling like a small tree in a hurricane. As soon as he bent his knees, his face flew downward and he almost lost his teeth. The spotters all wrestled the bar up, and by the grace of the lifting Gods, he didn't lose his teeth, his back, or his neck.

No matter how much someone screams, if you're not strong enough to lift a weight, don't try it! If you're a coach, you need to control what happens in the weight room. Educate people on how to make proper jumps in weight, how to use proper form, when to end a set before it's too late, etc.

At another spot on the high school weight room floor, a football player did one-arm dumbbell curls with his arm supported on an incline bench with a 20 lb dumbbell. The rest of the guys were hanging around, chatting. It seemed to be a typical day of socializing in this high school weight room.

On the "platform," I watched a football player performing his variation of the power clean: straight legs, round back and then attempting to jump the weight up with a reverse curl. The top of this movement finished with legs straddling wide like a jumping jack. The "catch" position was the top of a reverse curl and half a back bridge.

This day freaked me out, to put things lightly, and although it happened when I was only in my mid 20s, I will never forget the horrific training these kids went through. Are all high school weight rooms like this? No. But, I've seen plenty of exercise demonstrations from the athletes I train showing me what goes on in their weight room and it's dangerous on even their best days.

Do these athletes need to get tested in their 1-rep max on squats and power cleans? No. They're not strong or skilled enough to push such heavy weights and still control them. They've been pushed into an advanced program and skipped all the work that is required to build themselves up sufficiently to properly perform squats, deadlifts, bench presses, and power cleans. The fault is NOT on these kids. The coaches are to blame. I always tell

coaches, if you're not an expert in strength & conditioning, bring in an expert and get the help not just for you, but for these kids. This is all about the kids!

Coaches are missing the boat with incoming freshmen – fourteen-year-olds who often have no clue how to perform a bodyweight squat are being thrown into testing their 1 rep max on the squat. This is dangerous and stupid mixed together and in the end doesn't help the young athlete, it hurts him. These coaches are pushing their athletes to perform heavy back squats and other advanced exercises. With The Underground Strength System, you don't need to perform one-repetition max lifts unless you're an advanced lifter. You can test and track your strength and performance gains by tracking your numbers through each each 3 - 6 week mini cycle. You can also measure strength by looking at improvements in exercise technique — an often overlooked factor.



For example, you might have to squirm to perform five pushups but, one week later you might be able to perform five perfect pushups with a very rigid, tight body and no sagging of the stomach. In this case, you have not done more pushups. You did the same reps, but, your technique is better. The improved technique signifies an increase in strength.

When you perform mini cycles lasting 3 - 6 weeks, each work out and each cycle allows you to test if you are getting stronger. In week one you establish a baseline of strength. During week two, can you lift a little bit more weight for the same repetitions or simply exhibit better technique? On week 3 are you stronger than week 2? Simple, NOT easy. The key here is to track your weights, reps, and technique and unless you're advanced stay away from a 1-rep max.



Have Fun

Never lose sight of having fun with your workouts. No matter how intense and challenging they get, this should be fun. If you don't find that you've got the passion for intense workouts you will never make strong gains. As a coach, you will need to motivate, educate, and transform young minds into strong minds who respect and have passion for hard work.

For me, training is my form of meditation. As I've gotten older I have opened my mind up to more training methods, and don't discriminate against too much. I like to call myself a Soul Lifter. I learned how to be open minded from soul surfers, who will surf on any size or shaped board as well as body surf. They have passion for surfing first and foremost which is what drives them to be in the water regardless of the size of the waves or the board they use.

The men of The Golden Era were famous for having fun with their workouts. Look at the pics from the 60s and 70s of guys like Arnold, Franco, Draper, and the rest of The Muscle Beach crew. Look at the powerlifting crew that trained in Bill "Peanuts" West's garage, the original Westside Barbell. They ALL had smiles on their faces, yet these were some of the strongest, well- built men to ever walk the earth.



If you love training with kettlebells and they bring you the most passion and joy, then train with kettlebells and attack them with all your passion and might.

If you love training with bodyweight exercises and that's what fires you up, then train with bodyweight and give it your all, with passion and intensity all the time.



If you love to train with heavy barbells and dumbbells in an old school strength fashion, then by all means, train with free weights and attack those basics with passion like The Golden Era greats.

Whatever allows you to show up with passion and purpose, go for it. The goal is not to simply follow a 12-week training plan; the goal is to train for the rest of your life. Having a plan is critical, but that plan won't last unless you love your style of training.



The bottom line is this: To make any of this stuff work, you actually have to show up and DO it. You've got to show up and be consistent. You've got to fall in love with the basics and have a respect for hard work. The basics of consistency and commitment will never fail. Fancier, crazier workouts are not necessarily more effective.

If you're getting stale with your workouts, then step out of the gym and train outdoors. Hit the trails and go hiking or running. Carry stones, clean and press the stone, squat it, lunge it and carry it some more. Come across a low hanging branch strong enough to hold you up? Bang out some pullups and get back to moving till you see the next thing you lift

or carry.

You see, we often place limits on ourselves, setting a ceiling on what we think we are capable of doing. You become inundated with information, convincing yourself that if you train more than three days a week for more than 45 minutes per workout, your testosterone levels will drop and you will be sent into a downward spiral of overtraining, your muscles will shrivel away, and you will be stuck in bed for 10 days recovering.

"Do not pray for an easy life, pray for the strength to endure a difficult one"

— Bruce Lee

Your ability to train hard is based on your belief systems and who you surround yourself with. Surround yourself with mentally and physically weak people who fear attacking workouts and pushing the limits, and you will be weak. Surround yourself with positive thinkers and aggressive action takers, and you will become strong in AND out of the gym.

Certainly, you can over train when you take things too frequently and too far beyond your physical preparedness. But, even more so, you can under eat, under rest, and simply not take care of your body or mind. If you give disregard to doing all the right things outside of the gym that help you become stronger in the gym, the progress will never be there.

NO Rules Training

There are rules and general guidelines to follow when training, and then there are times where you must break the rules, push through boundaries, and conquer the BS that holds you back. If you're stuck in a rut, it's likely time for you to break the rules.

Every once in a while, you need to test yourself to make sure you still have the edge, and even more so, to ensure you continually grow tougher in mind, body, and spirit. You find yourself doing the same style of training. Perhaps you're always lifting heavy and shying away from conditioning. Perhaps you're always running and doing hundreds of burpees a day and shy away from getting stronger and lifting heavy objects. We ALL get caught in a rut sometimes; that's just the way it goes. We're not perfect and sometimes you need a kick in the ass.

I have always been inspired and intrigued by the special forces units in the military. I remember when my older brother was in the Israeli Army. He told me about a challenge that he and the rest of the soldiers had to go through to be accepted into a special unit. He explained to me how brutal it was, how his body went through the most intense aches, pains and cramping in every ounce of his body, in parts of his body he never knew could experience such pain.

As the challenge wore on, he didn't know if his body would be able to continue through this challenge due to all the cramping. His mind said yes, but his body was shutting down. His body was screaming NO while his mind insisted on never quitting. Every time they reached a certain area through this challenge, thinking they were finally at the finish line, there would be soldiers stationed, telling them that they were almost done. And then, the next soldier would tell them they're NOT almost done, playing mind games and encouraging the soldiers to quit, to stop pushing their bodies so much, to just give up. It was a trick, to see if they could mentally push through these limits and boundaries of what "normal" people accept as limits.

Mark Divine, Navy SEAL and creator of SEALFit, encourages you to start by eliminating the "quit" from your vocabulary. Once I learned this technique I did exactly what he said, and it's amazing what the body can suddenly do when you refuse to allow quit to enter your vocabulary, let alone enter your thoughts.

I'll never forget that story my brother told me, as I personally experienced what it's like to go through that type of mental and physical challenge. After being inspired by Navy SEALs and reading countless books written by Navy SEALs and other special forces military units, I was lucky enough to have two Navy SEALs go through my Underground Strength Coach Certification. Both of them were coaches for SEALFit.



I met with Mark Divine, and we exchanged discussing whether Mark would be willing

to hold a mini Navy SEAL Challenge on the beaches of NJ. Mark agreed, and created a 12-hr challenge that would push us to the limits and beyond—physically, mentally, and spiritually. As soon as the date was locked down for this challenge, my friends and I began training aggressively.

We immediately started to step up our training intensity, and we broke all the rules of optimal training. When training for a 12-hr challenge you can't think that 45 minute workouts will help you kick ass.

My training volume increased big-time. I trained with more overall volume each workout, and more frequently through the week. Each workout was longer and more intense than my normal training sessions. Oftentimes, I would combine two to three workouts into one training session to prep myself for the challenge of going through multiple workouts in succession.

I was never a distance runner; it was something I always made an excuse for not doing. The last time I ran distance was when I was in high school training for wrestling, when I would run 3-5 miles a night, every other night. Yet here I was, over 20 years later, getting back into distance running and changing my attitude.

At first, the running was brutal. I could barely run a mile without feeling like hell. I made excuses and lied to myself for years about why I should not run distances beyond 400 meters. "I'm a power athlete," I'd say to myself and others. I had to slap myself in the face and follow my motto of getting uncomfortable. Every week I practiced running in various formats.

Sometimes I would do the running first in my workout, and other times I would do it at the end of a workout. Other times I would sprinkle it in between sets during a workout, combining heavy lifts with sprints. My motto was to get comfortable being uncomfortable, and I committed to living it in every aspect of my life.

"Get Comfortable Being UNcomfortable"

— Frequent Underground Strength Gym Quote

I quickly realized just how much more capable my body truly was. All I had to do was train for it instead of avoiding it. Yet for all these years, I was making excuses, saying things like, "I think I'm just too big to be a good runner." At 220 pounds, I thought I

shouldn't be able to run distance. I thought my forte was to just lift heavy and aggressively.

I was placing limits on myself, just like you probably are or at least have done in the past to yourself. I put a ceiling over my head, creating self-imposed limits, telling myself that I shouldn't be able to run, when the truth and the bottom line is this; if you want to perform a certain way, all you need to do is commit to it and train like a madman with focus to acquire those specific results.

WHY!??

What drives you to train, to achieve success, to get off your ass and go through intense training that other people consider crazy and strange?

You need to discover your "WHY?" A very close friend and mentor to me, Quatro Deuce, a Navy SEAL, brought this concept to my attention and taught me how to apply this to my life. We were having dinner one night, and he asked me if I wanted to partake in a 3- day long distance bike ride, each day would be several hundred miles of biking. It sounded like a crazy adventure that I simply wasn't cut out for.

I immediately fired back at him, "Dude, I can't do that! I'm not in shape for that stuff!"

But he quickly responded, "What if your kids were kidnapped?!"

I said, "Hells yea I'd do it!"

Quatro Deuce replied with confidence, "Then you're ready for it; you just need a big enough WHY?"

Unless you push yourself into the unknown every once in a while, you will never truly know what your body is capable of. Once the mind decides that you are strong enough & tough enough to make it through these hellish workouts, you begin feeling pride when you start training. You start to realize that no matter what challenge comes at you, be it in sport or life, you will emerge the victor.

This is why I recommend that at least once a month you put something together for yourself – and if you're lucky, a few friends – that pushes you into the unknown. As you progress, these challenges can be held every other week and eventually once a week. These workouts won't be your typical 45-minute to one-hour workout. They will last two hours, three hours, maybe even longer. Set no rules, set no limits, and you will quickly learn what you're all about mentally, physically and spiritually.

I've implemented training challenges in various ways. One of my favorites was when I took a mountain bike ride through a state park during a cold winter day. I did not know my way around this massive state park and one wrong turn leads to another wrong turn

which keeps leading me further and further away from finding my way back to civilization.

I got lost. I ran out of water and was freezing my ass off, but instead of freaking out and losing my cool, I smiled and laughed instead of worrying. I thought about my kids, who always give me strength, and kept my eye on the sun, hoping that it would lead me to the exit rather than deeper into the maze of bike trails far away from home.

Your challenges don't need to be from inside the gym walls. As emphasized earlier, get OUT of the gym and challenge yourself. You owe it to yourself to see what you're made of. Training will never push you and motivate you for life if your end goal is only to have a bigger chest and bigger arms than the next guy.

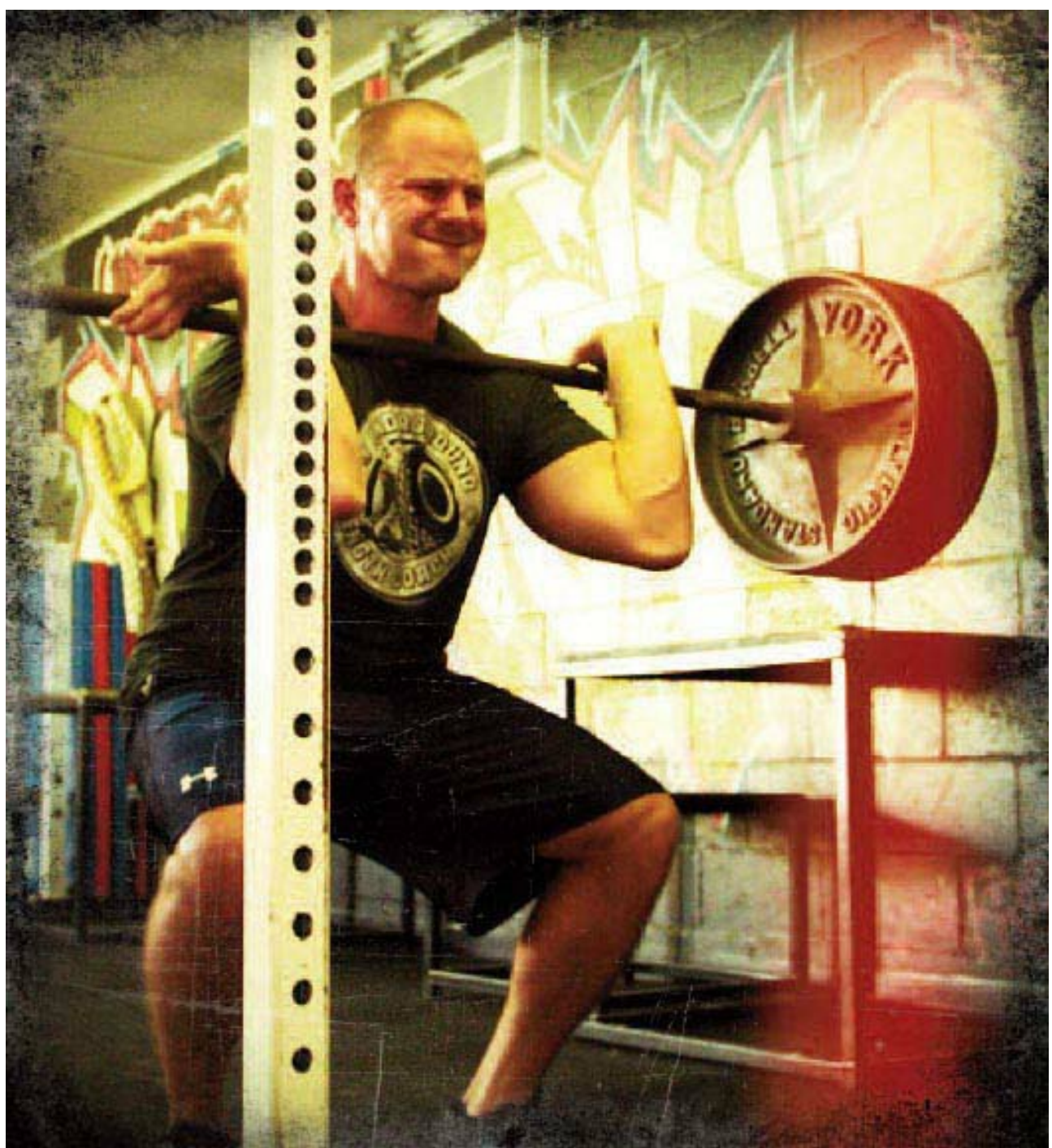
This might seem like a hellish experience for some, but for me and those who follow what Underground Strength is all about, these hellish challenges are fun and we love them! This is where our passion lies, in utilizing training to develop yourself into a stronger person; not just in the physical sense, but also in the mental and spiritual sense.

Stronger In Mind, Body & Spirit

Once you discover your WHY, it is OK to allow your WHY to evolve and change over time. In fact, it should change over time as you personally grow and evolve. When you think your body can't handle the challenges of work, training, or life, ask yourself if you've set a self-imposed limit or if you truly need to stop. You can very likely continue pushing to the next level. You don't always need to take it to this level, but you have to decide what you need most. If you need more mental toughness, then be honest with yourself and make it happen when training. Oftentimes all we need to keep on keepin' on is the right attitude.

Now by all means, I'm not telling you to go out there to be dangerous and stupid. You can still put yourself through these challenges and train smart. Little by little, month by month, you keep pushing that envelope a little bit more. You remove the ceiling and you remove the limitations, and every month you grow as a person by achieving a little bit more every single workout. And before you know it, you will stop setting limits on yourself altogether, be it in training or in life. Habits are often formed after 3 weeks of daily practice. Get a journal and write your daily goals down, review your goals and at the end of each day write down 3 achievements you've accomplished. As mentioned earlier, celebrate your victories.

In a nutshell, always have fun in your training, and start pushing yourself outside your current comfort zone. Push yourself and let your WHY motivate you to keep going for that next level. Soon enough, what others consider as going through hell you will consider as FUN!



TRAINING TOOLS & METHODS

BODYWEIGHT TRAINING

The power of bodyweight training can never and should never be underestimated. You don't need to be able to perform acrobatics, but you should be strong and agile – able to perform a myriad of bodyweight exercises ranging from pushing to pulling, jumping, squatting, lunging, climbing, crawling, and so forth.

Bodyweight training should be the essence of any introductory training program. It offers you the ability to perform many regressions and progressions to match your level of strength.

When I hear about incoming high school freshmen being placed on a program of squats, bench press, power clean, and deadlift, yet these same kids can't perform one good bodyweight squat, one perfect push up and one strict pullup, we have a **SERIOUS** problem.

Before you touch a barbell, free weight, tire, etc. you **MUST** develop stability, strength and body awareness through bodyweight exercises first and foremost. Here are the bodyweight exercises you must begin with:

- ✓ Squats
- ✓ Lunges (Forwards, Walking, Reverse)
- ✓ Pushups
- ✓ Pullups Or Recline Rows
- ✓ Dip Bar Knee Raises

Get great at the exercises above where you can maintain proper technique from start to finish on each set, full range of motion and full body tension. For example, the pushup is **NOT** just for the chest, shoulders and triceps. When performing the pushup you must tense your abs, squeeze your butt muscles, squeeze your legs. Pull your triceps into your lats and engage the entire body as one unit. This full body tension will carry over to other exercises, both bodyweight and externally loaded.

The first time I had a rude awakening with bodyweight exercises was in college during gymnastics class, when I couldn't perform plyo push ups during a challenge. I saw other

less built classmates successfully finish and I was pissed off! I learned how challenging it was to perform jump training, hand walking and muscle ups from gymnastics class.

Through my experiences in training athletes both in my gym and out of the gym, I've seen how weak and untrained athletes are mainly because they are not shown the proper way to begin training. Instead, uneducated coaches and parents throw these kids to the sharks and in turn they get injured while also picking up bad habits in technique.

Technique is the priority, always. Bodyweight training can be started at any age and can be used from warm-ups to workouts to active recovery workouts and more.

Here are the multiple ways in which I utilize bodyweight training:

- ✓ Warm-up
- ✓ Large Group Workouts
- ✓ Deload Workouts
- ✓ Circuit Training
- ✓ Supplemental Work After A Heavy Lift
- ✓ Speed / Explosive Training
- ✓ Muscle Building
- ✓ Isometric Strength

Bodyweight training is also a great time to assess weak areas or imbalances. When someone moves in any fashion that is a great time to assess. This can show difficulty in stability, balance, poor mobility, etc.

For example, in the pushup, can you maintain a rigid trunk and core during the push up without sagging the abs and hips?

Do your neck and head shoot downward and fall out of alignment from your spine? Do your hips drop on the way up from a push up?

These are some of the things we look for, and bodyweight exercise offers a safer approach to assessing and introducing exercise compared to testing someone who is not highly trained with a heavy barbell on a complex lift such as the squat or power clean.

I've also used bodyweight training exclusively when I was experiencing severe pain in my shoulders, back, knees, hands, and feet. I had been training for over 20 years at this point, and felt as if my body was rejecting heavy lifting of any type.

I decided to take a break from any form of exercises outside of bodyweight training and sports activities such as running, biking, swimming, tennis, etc.

I had always been heavily influenced by Louie Simmons and the conjugate method, so I applied a portion of the conjugate method to my bodyweight training. People often think of it as an after thought, or only as a finisher in circuit fashion.

Not many people were using bodyweight training for the same gains they wanted from free weights. I decided to test drive bodyweight training alone while breaking down each training day with a focus. I created this program and called it 'Bodyweight Bodybuilding'. You can learn more about it at <http://BodyweightBodybuilding.com>

DAY 1: STRENGTH FOCUS

Add resistance to bodyweight exercises and keep reps low.

DAY 2: SPEED / EXPLOSIVE POWER FOCUS

Perform higher sets, lower reps and execute all reps with high speeds.

DAY 3: MUSCLE BUILDING FOCUS

This day would focus on high reps and forcing lots of blood into the muscles. Rep tempo was controlled and sometimes slow to squeeze the muscles and increase time under tension.

DAY 4: FREESTYLE

On this day I would practice my skills and simply play. I didn't get caught up in how many sets or reps I did. If I felt I needed to practice muscles-ups or various hand walking variations I did just that and never pushed the pace on my rest periods.

I mixed in conditioning and circuits after finishing the focus portion of each day. Sometimes they were part of my activities such as mountain biking, swimming, training on the beach, etc.

What started as a 30 day experiment wound up lasting for close to 5 months. Once my body began telling me it was time to introduce heavy lifting again, I did so but with low volume and while carefully monitoring how my body felt after lifting heavy.

I wound up calling this experiment 'Bodyweight Bodybuilding'. During this experiment I trimmed my waistline, lost unwanted body fat, and got rid of my joint aches and pains.

" The power of bodyweight training has been proven to me through my own experiences through my own training, through the benefits my athletes have received and through learning from other bodyweight training experts. One of my favorite bodyweight training

books is **Convict Conditioning**. I highly recommend that book to everyone, not just because I utilize bodyweight exercises so often, but because the book teaches you regressions and progressions along with proper technique.

From gymnastics, to warm-ups, to power development and more, bodyweight training should be a part of your programming. Check out our bodyweight exercise index as well as our bodyweight challenges.

The Underground Strength Gym Bodyweight Warm-up

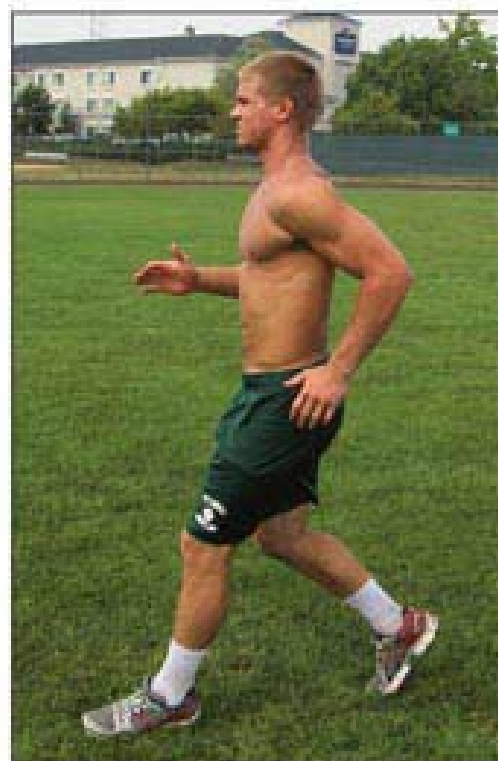
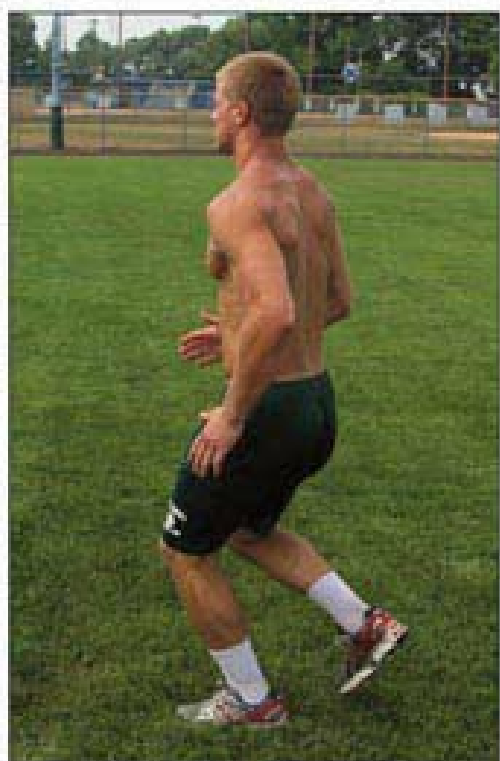
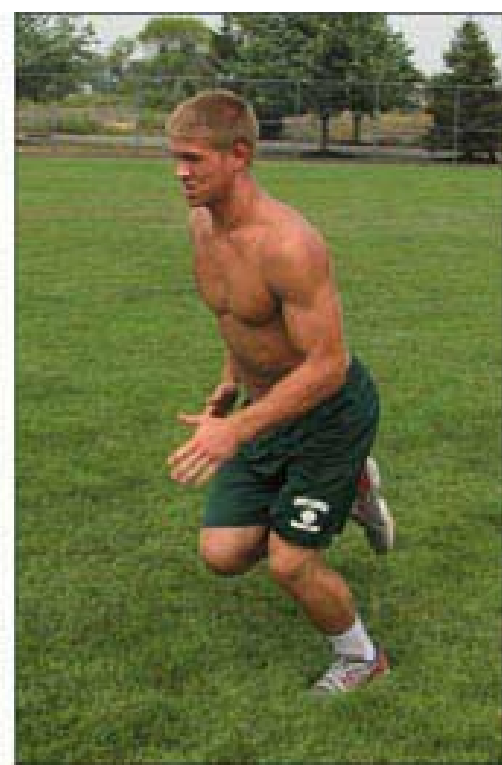
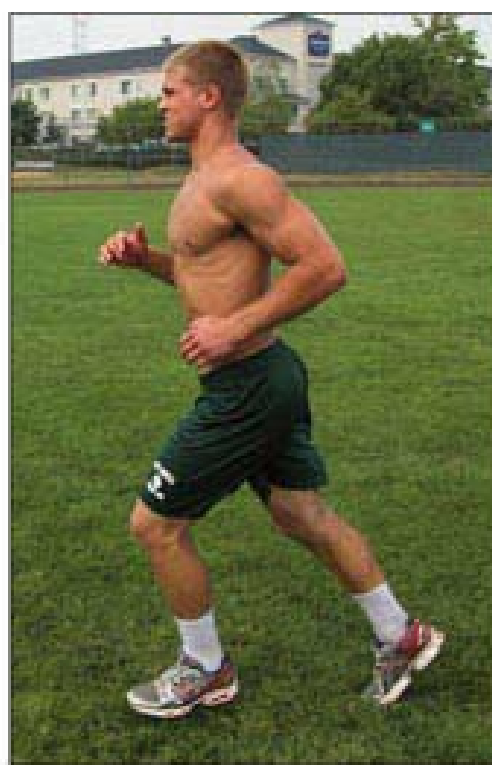
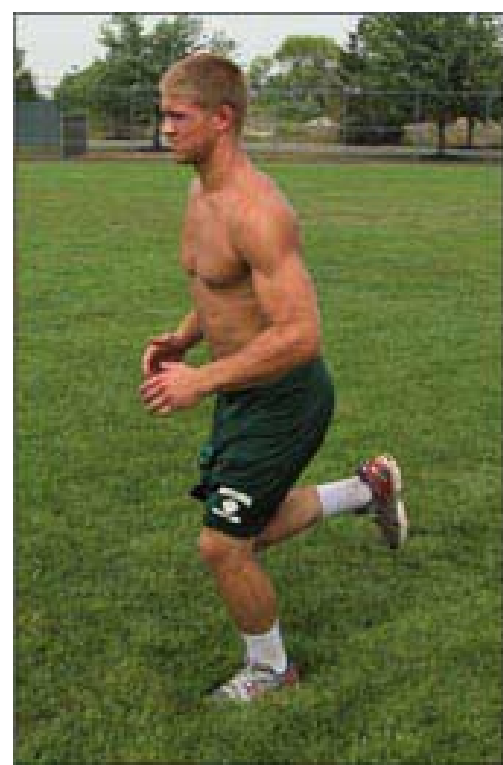
Note: Some of the power drills such as the squat jumps & lunge jumps are also used for high reps during our workouts. During the warm-up they are performed for lower reps and lower sets.

JOGGING

Jog slowly and simply to warm up your legs, feet, and ankles. Get the blood pumping through your body and begin to focus on the workout ahead, getting your mind & body prepared. Keep your posture with your shoulders slightly back. Avoid the hunch back position. Jogging should avoid the heel strike. Pretend you are jogging while jumping rope at the same time so you softly land on the ball of your foot and then your heel gently kisses the ground.

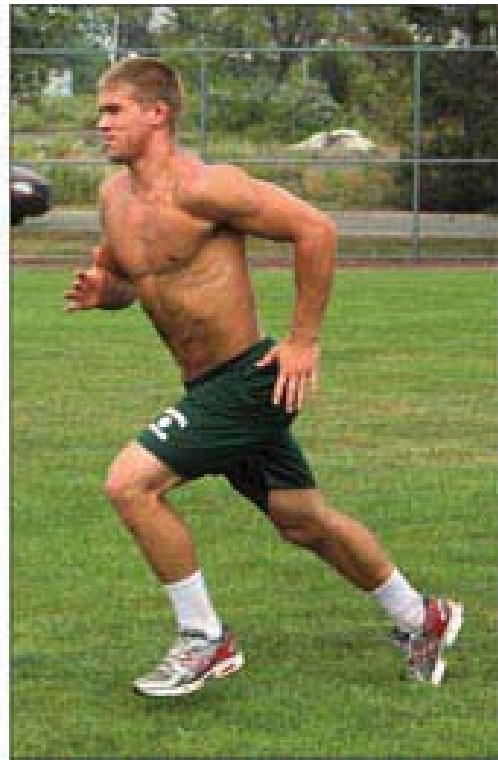
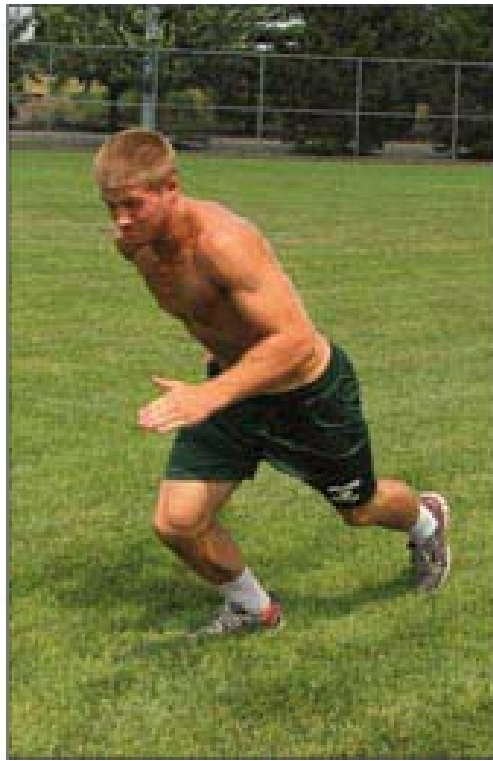
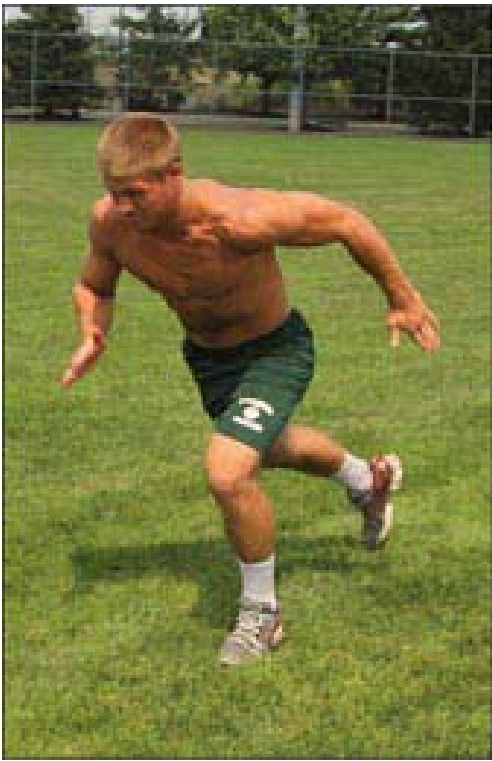
If weather doesn't allow, then utilize a jump rope for your movement.

Jog backward the same distance you jogged forward.



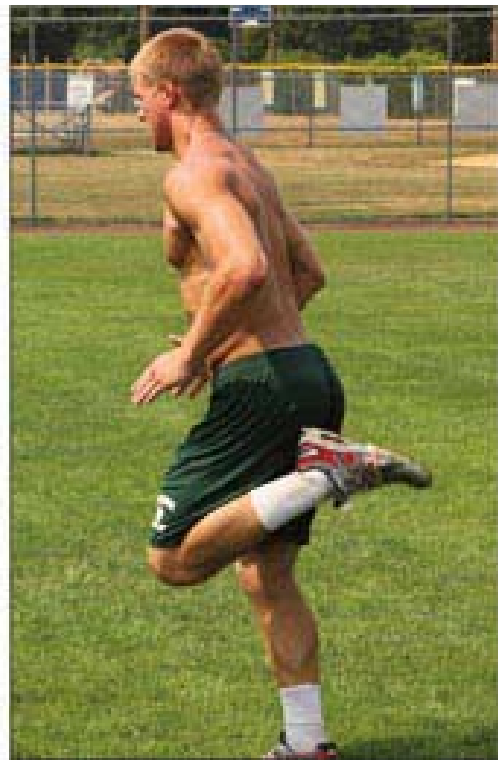
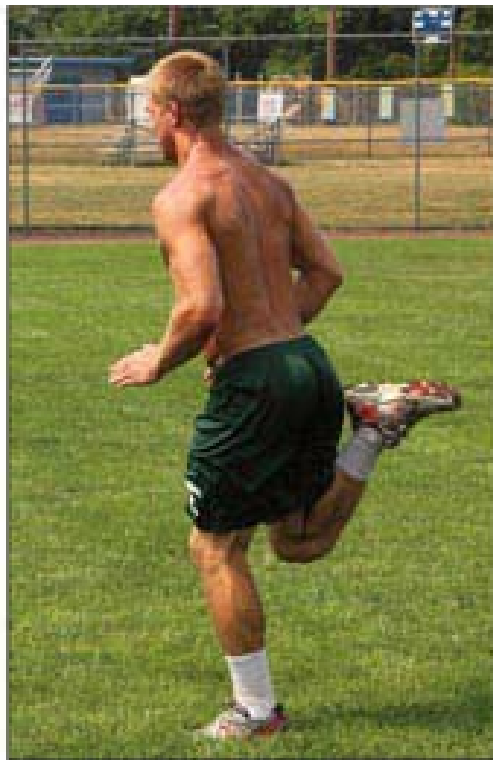
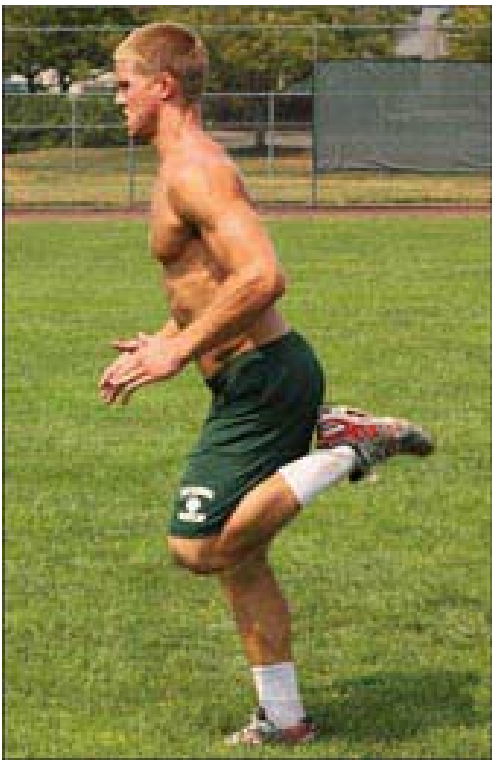
RUNNING

After a few trips of forward / backward jogs, increase your pace and hit a few forward / backward runs at a moderate pace. This is just a warm-up, so remember to increase intensity gradually.



BUTT KICKS

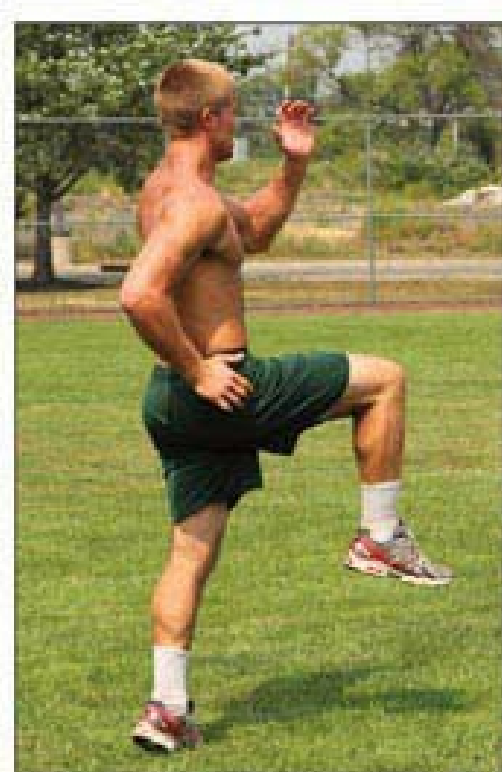
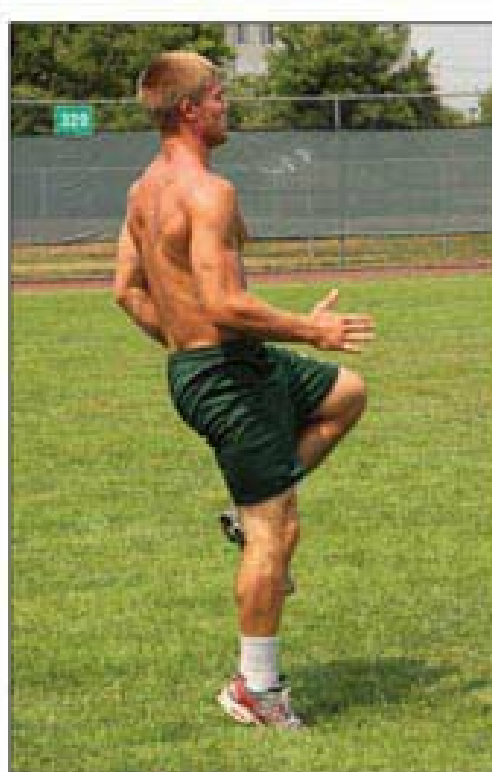
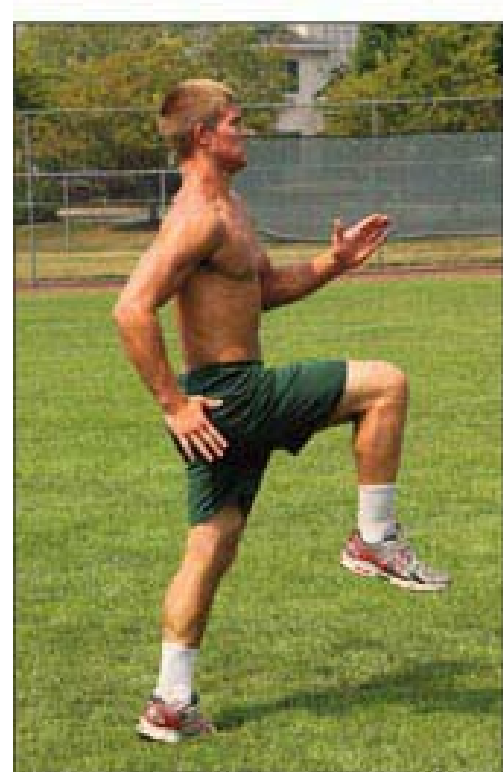
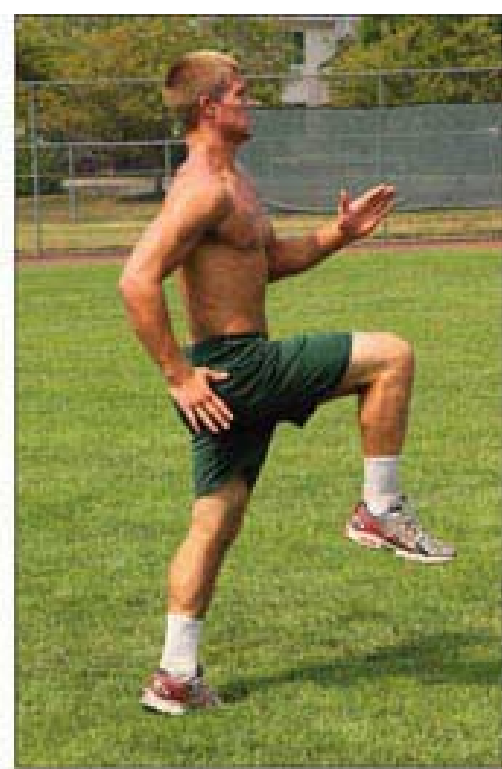
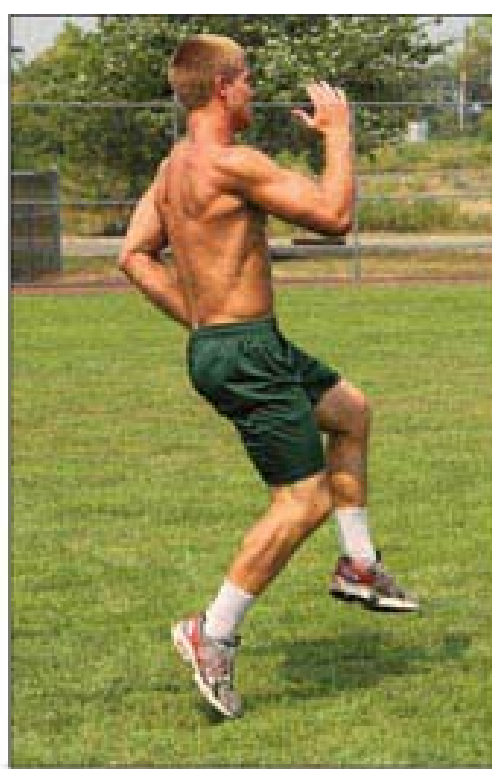
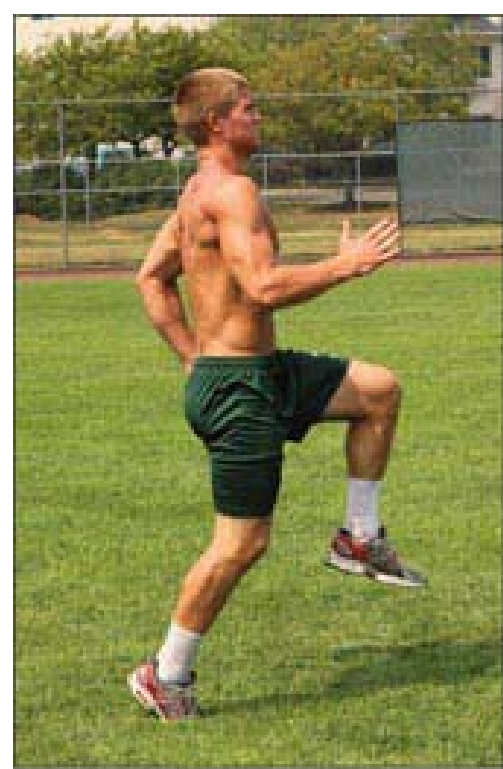
Keep your abs engaged and posture upright. Again, no rounding of the back and fire those heels up.



SKIPPING FORWARD AND BACKWARD

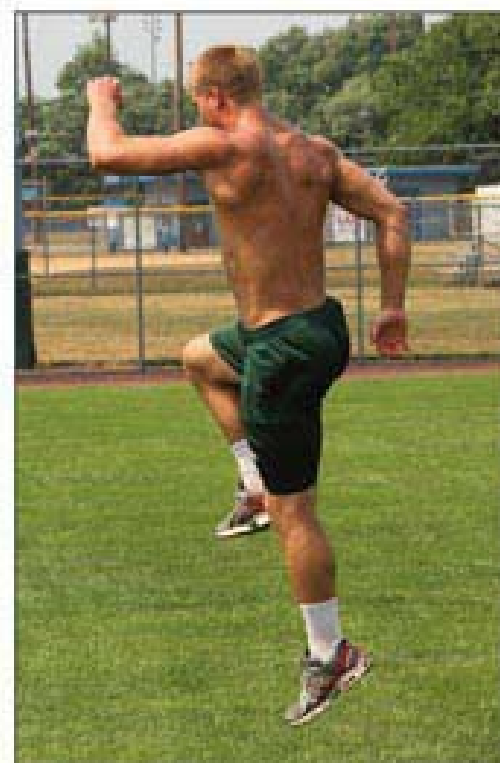
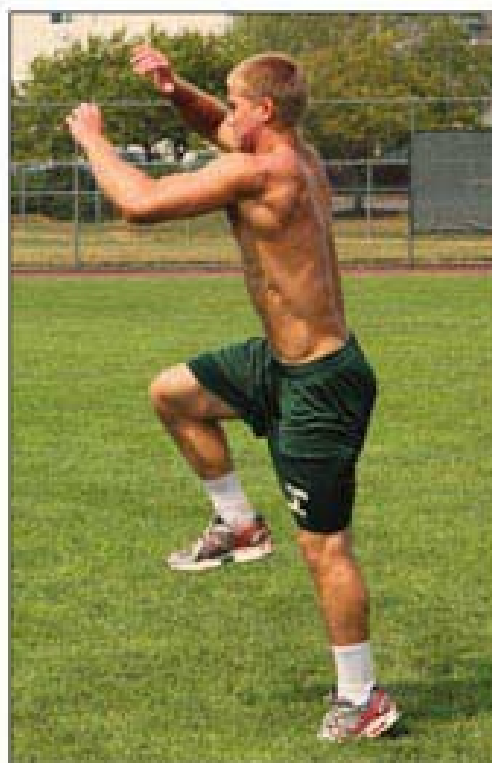
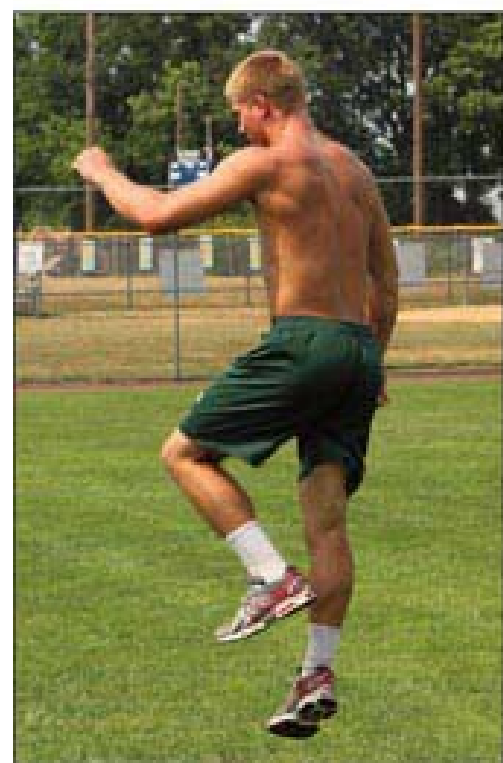
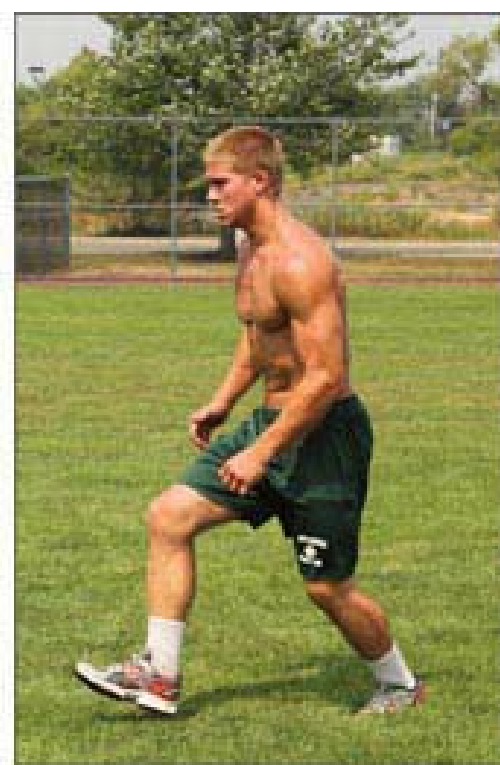
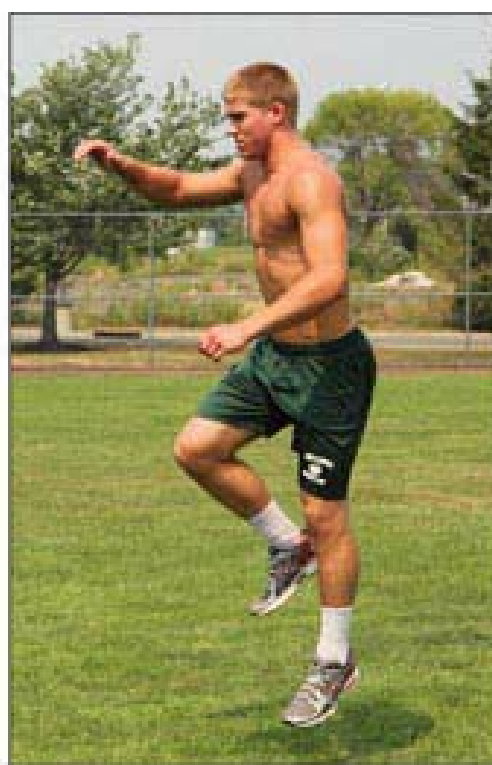
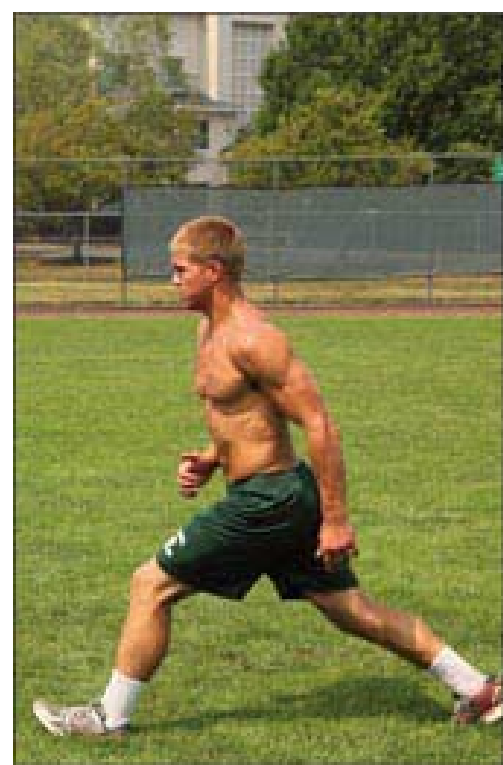
Skip forward & backward. Do a few trips of forward and backward to slowly get the ankles warmed up. Increase the pop from your legs with each trip. The backward skips are great for improving coordination and athleticism. A skip is broken down into the two

motions of simply taking a step, and then hopping on one leg. Step & hop, step & hop....



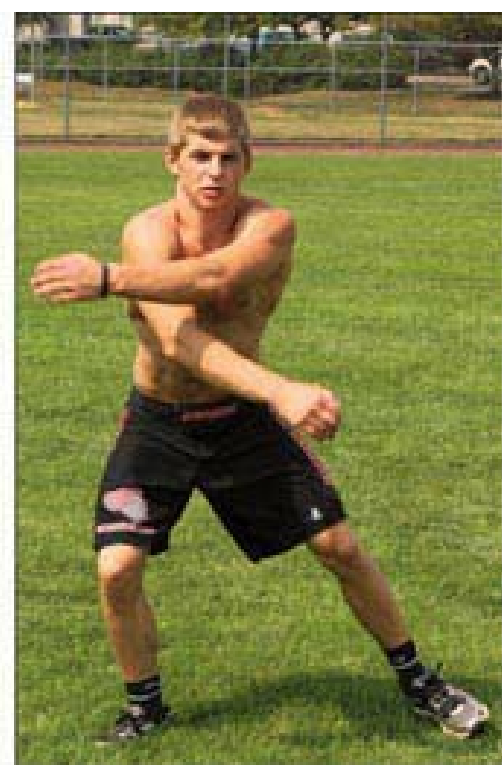
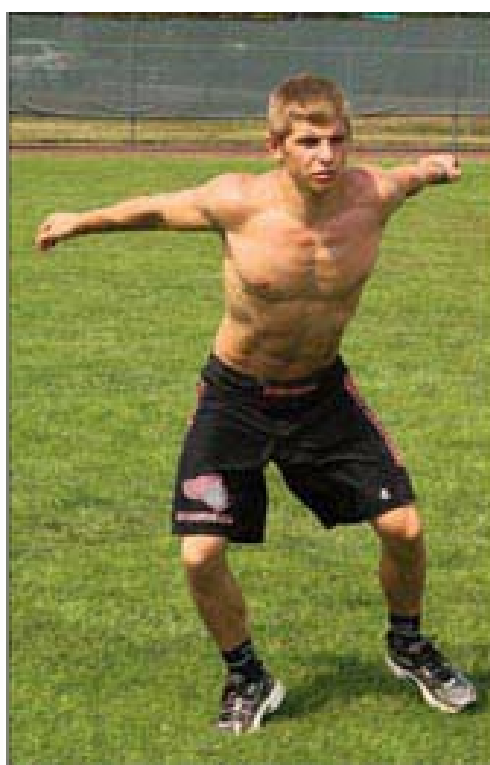
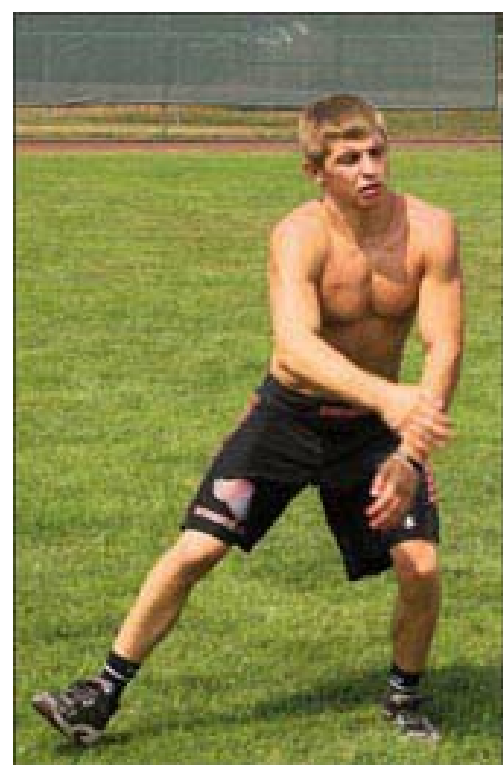
POWER SKIPPING

Once your legs and ankles are warmed up you can begin your power skips. We do these forward only, not backward. Your goal is to explosively drive upward and land softly. Make sure you are not landing heavily on your feet. Think about a cat landing from a jump; they absorb their landing rather than crashing down after their jumps.



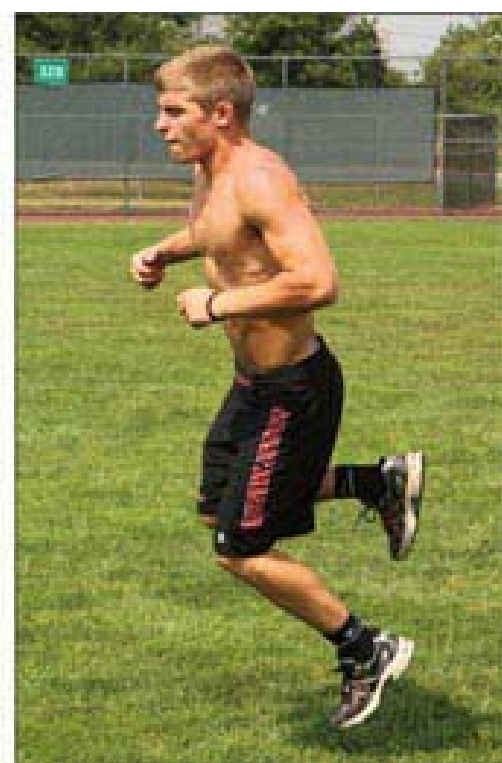
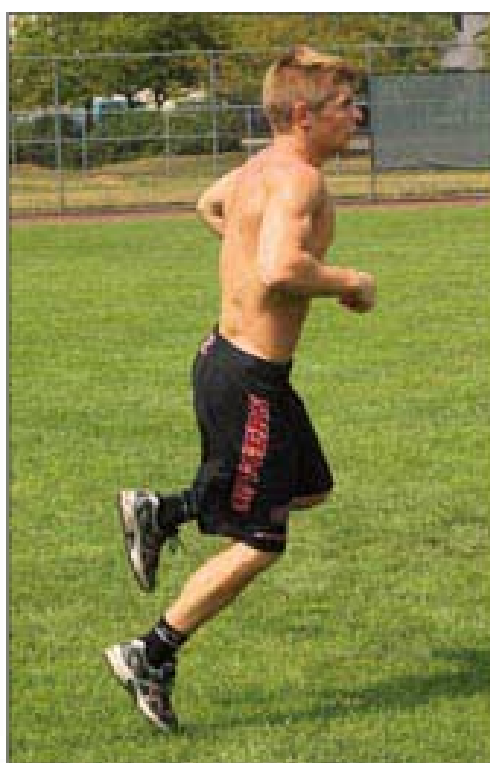
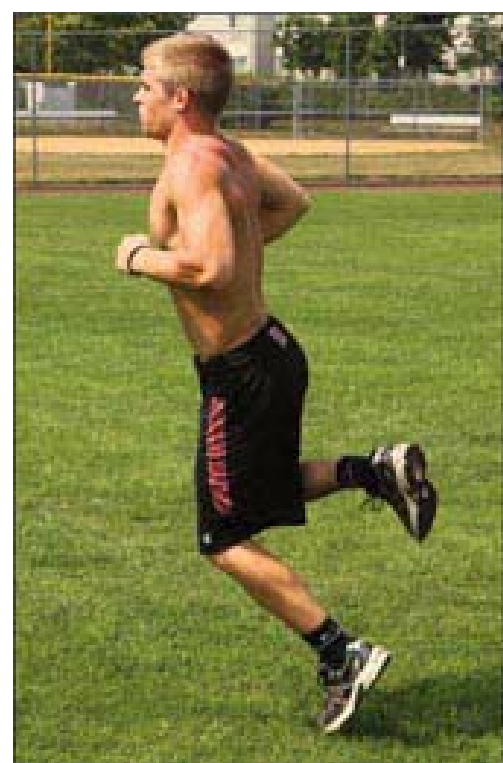
SIDE SHUFFLE

Shuffle sideways both left and right. As you shuffle pop from your feet and get some height off the ground. Cross your arms over and under and stretch your chest and shoulders when you pull your arms back. Perform the same distance in each direction.



HOPS

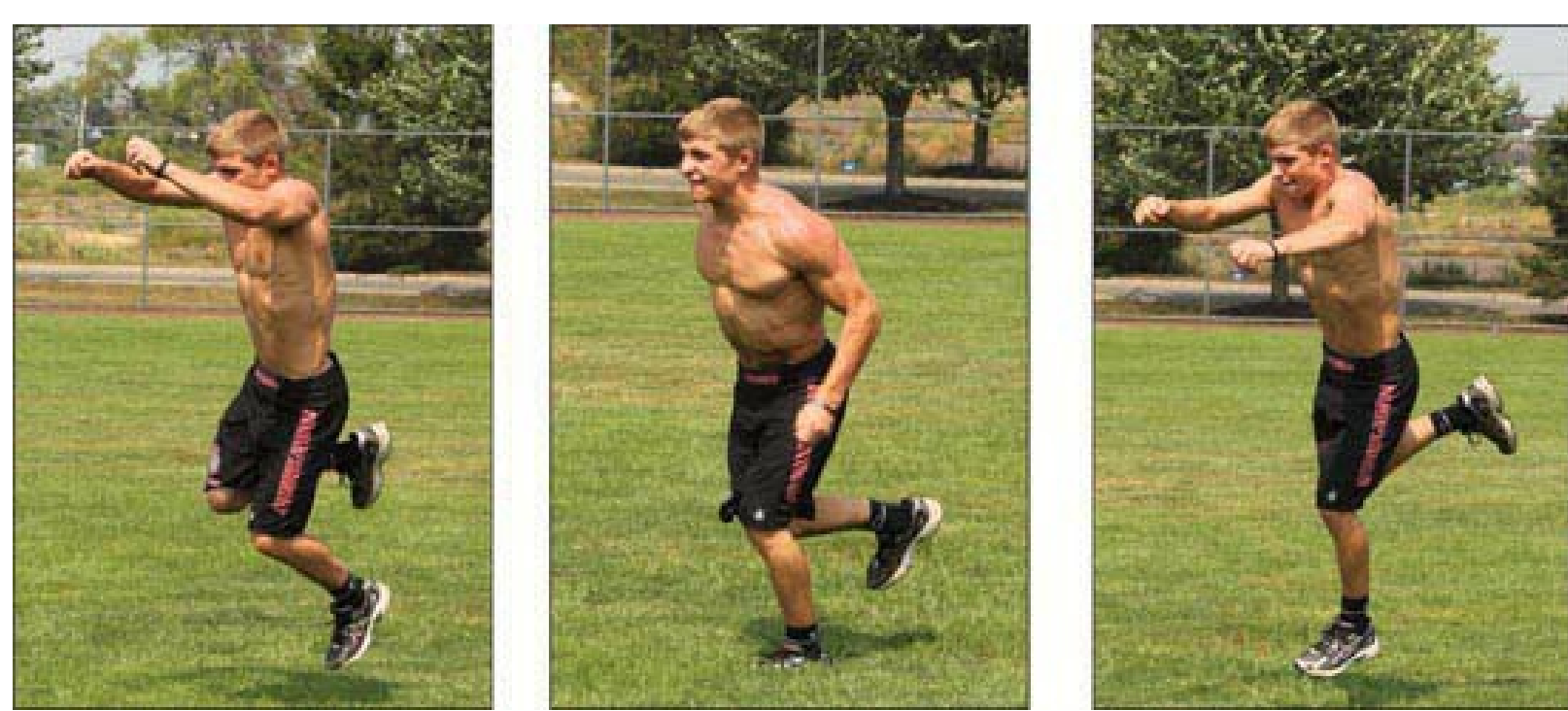
Nice and light, hop on one foot. Keep your posture upright and stay on the ball of your foot. There is NO heel striking when hopping. These are excellent for developing strength, balance, and stability on one foot. You can also hop sideways and backwards to add variety and more athleticism to this drill.



POWER HOP

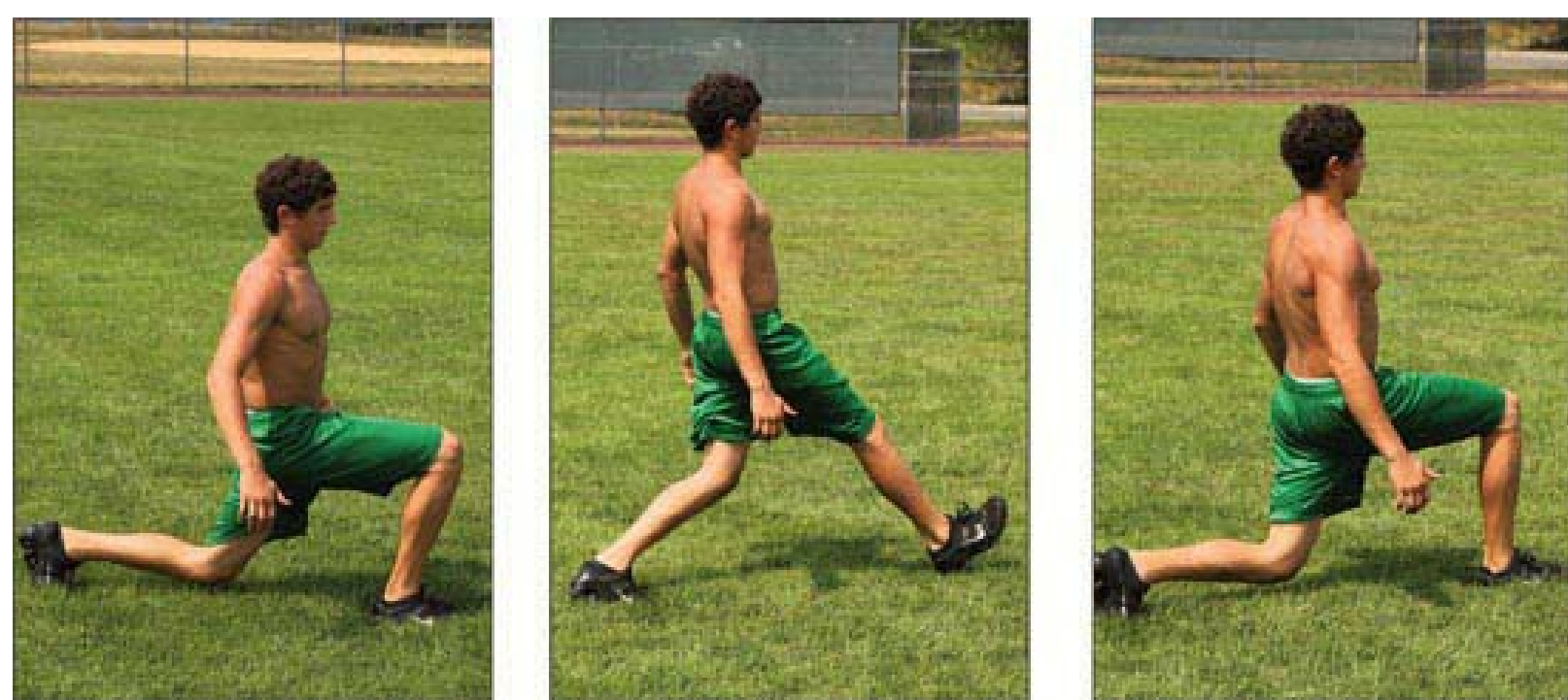
Explode onto one foot and use both arms to help propel you forward. Each hop should

smoothly transition into the next hop with a touch and go motion. You can also hop and catch the landing if you are training athletes to develop more balance and stability. Just make sure their ankles and feet are warmed up, and that they are physically prepared for power hops.



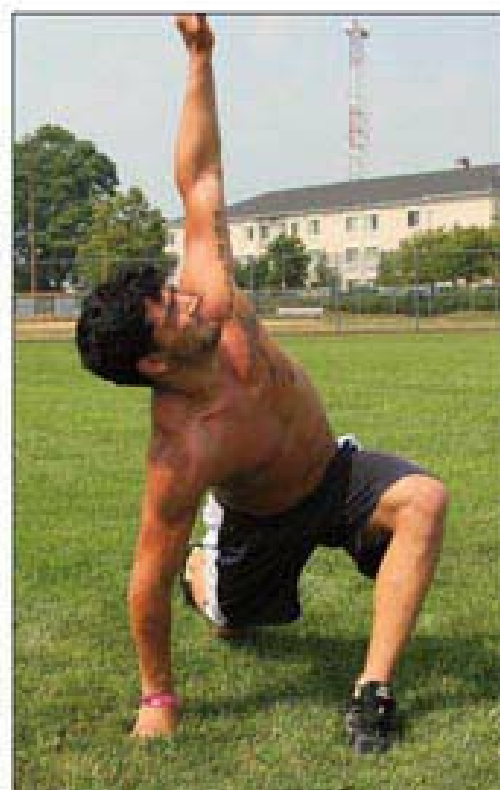
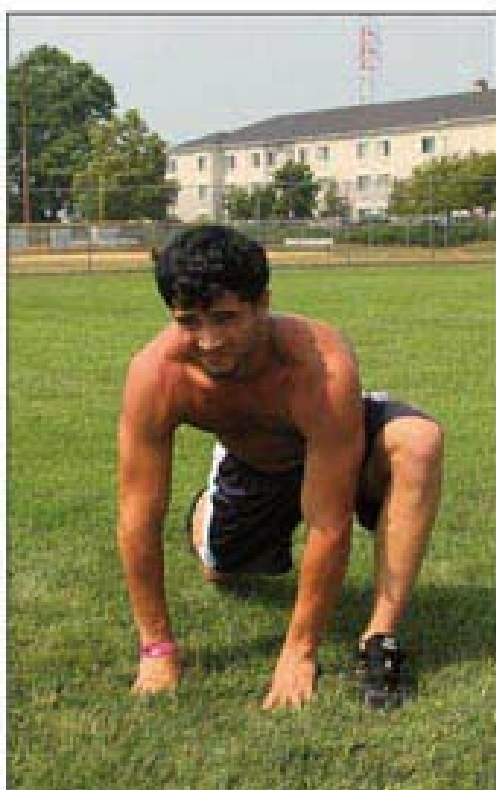
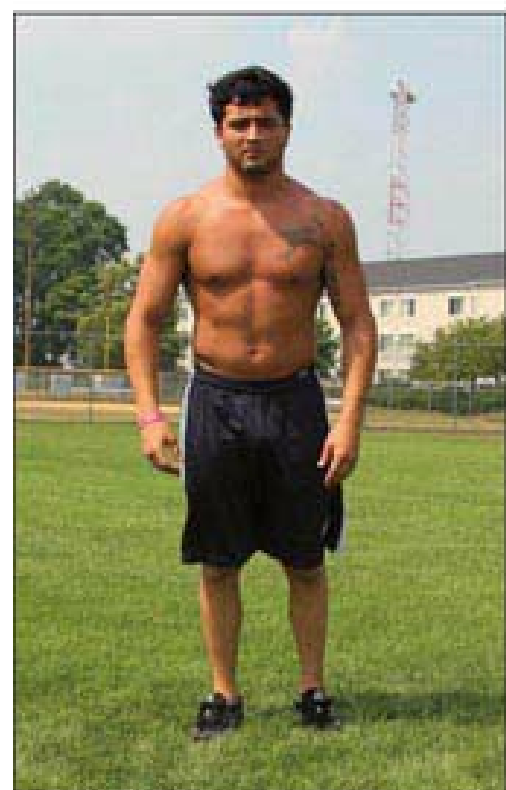
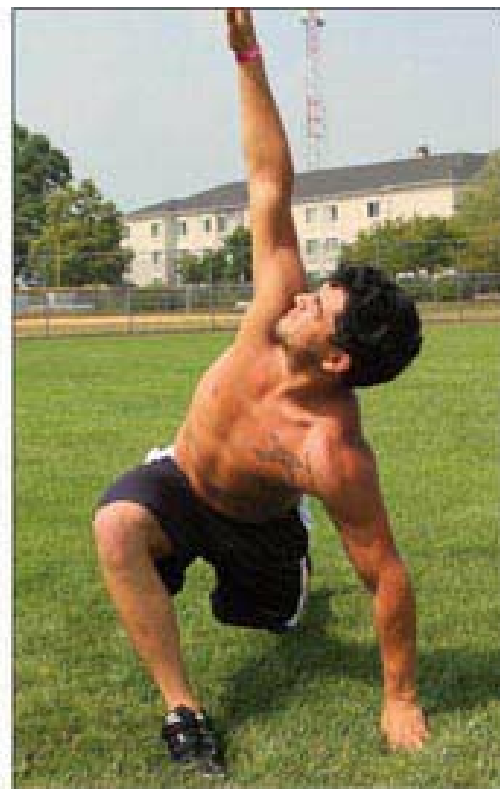
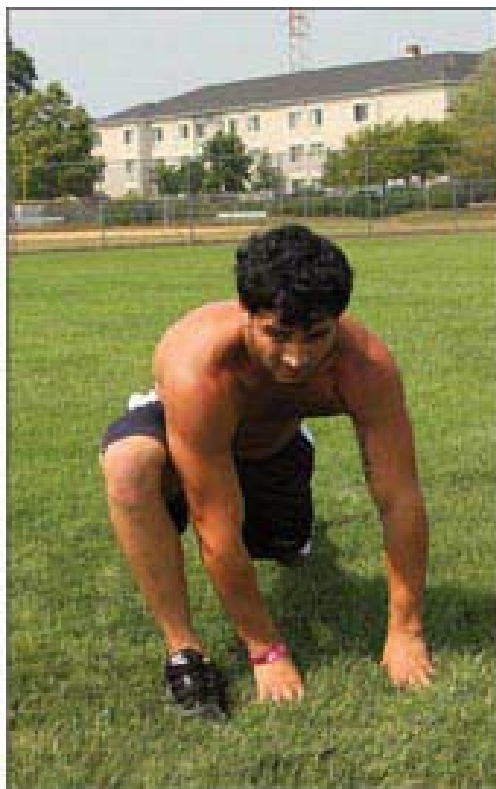
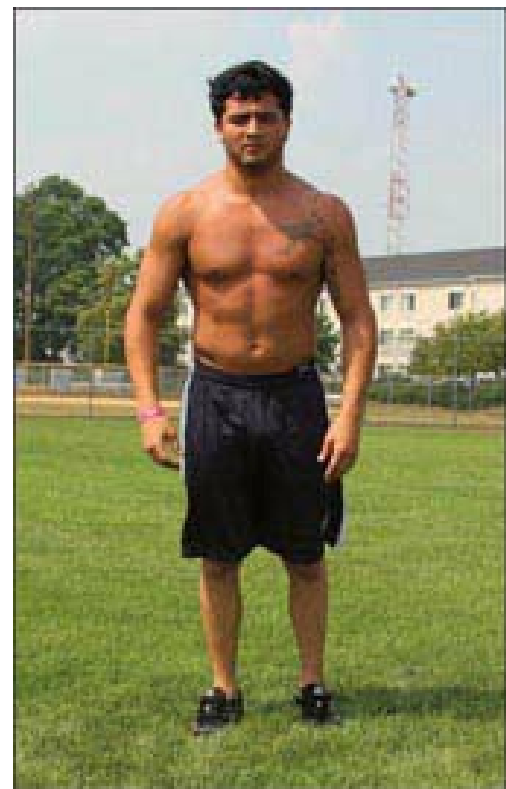
WALKING LUNGE

Take a long lunge stride and keep your posture upright, abs engaged. Your back knee will be about 1 - 2" from the ground. I prefer NOT to allow athletes to get into the habit of hitting their knees to the ground because if you have to do this warm-up on the concrete, it can lead to injury. Stop the back knee just shy of touching the ground for safety and optimal control. Alternate legs every rep.

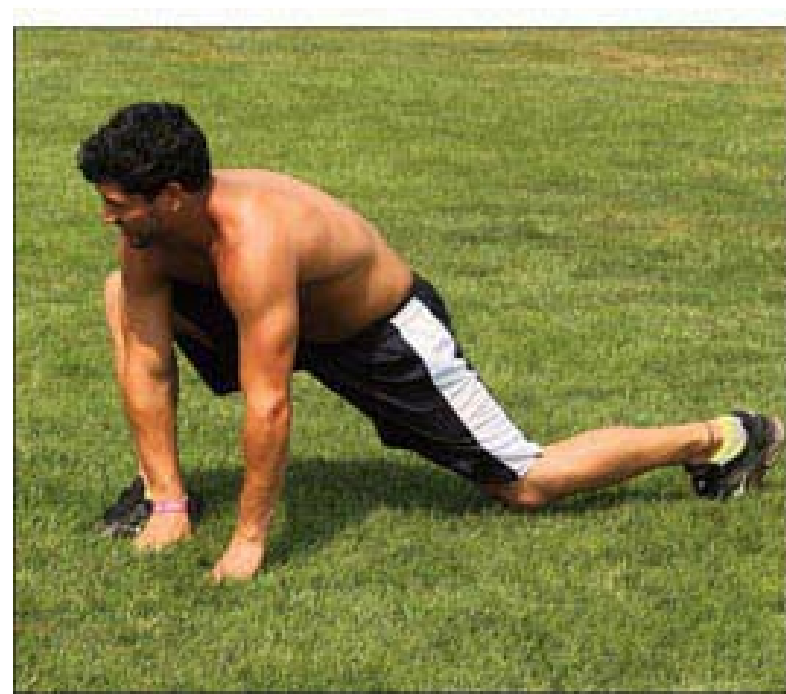


ROTATIONAL LUNGE

After hitting 5 - 10 solid lunges on each leg, perform another 8 - 10 with rotation through your trunk. Perform a regular lunge and bring both hands to the ground, inside your forward leg. From there, lift your inside arm straight up to the sky and look at your hand. Deeply inhale and exhale as you hold that position, then return your hand back to the ground and drive out of the lunge, transitioning into your next arm. As your mobility improves, you can bring your outside arm up to point toward the sky.

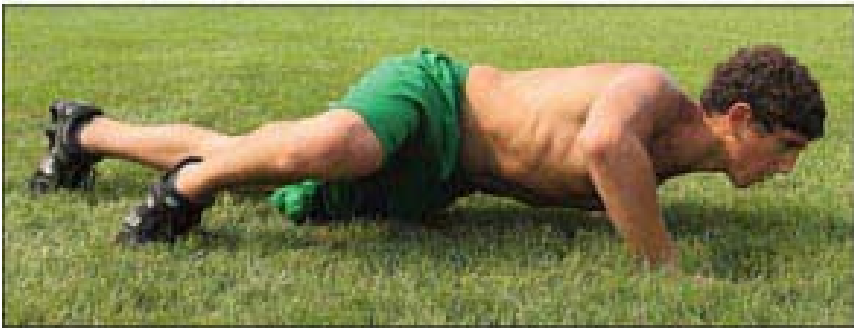
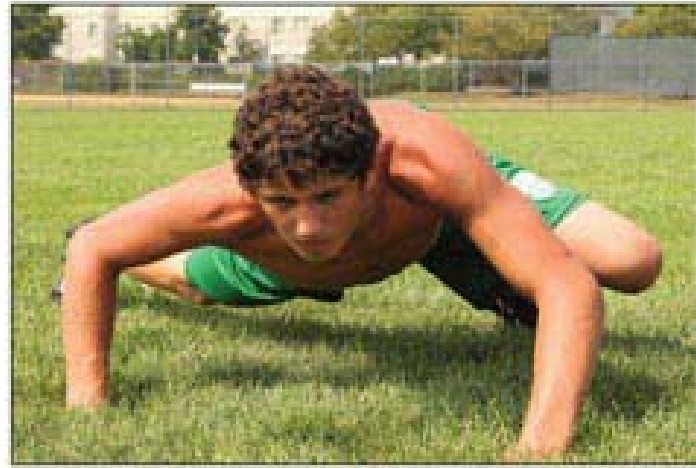
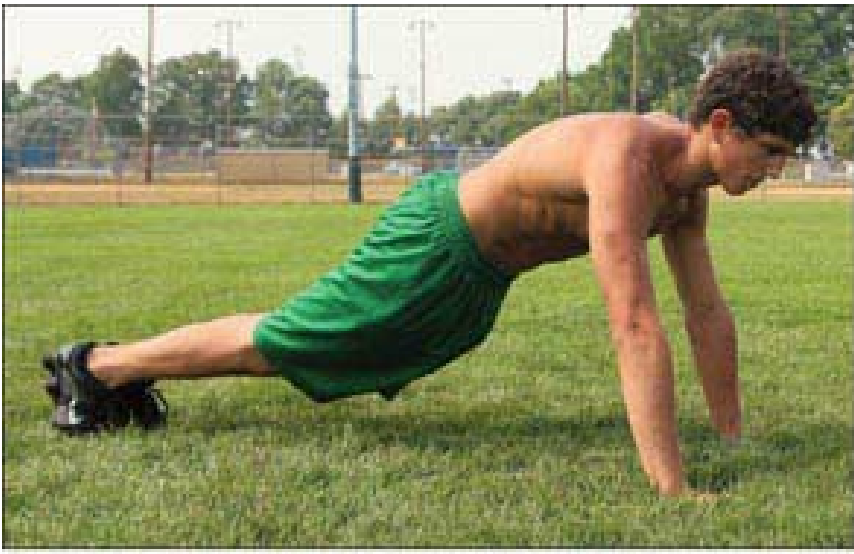


ROTATIONAL LUNGE (SIDE VIEW)



ALLIGATOR PUSHUP

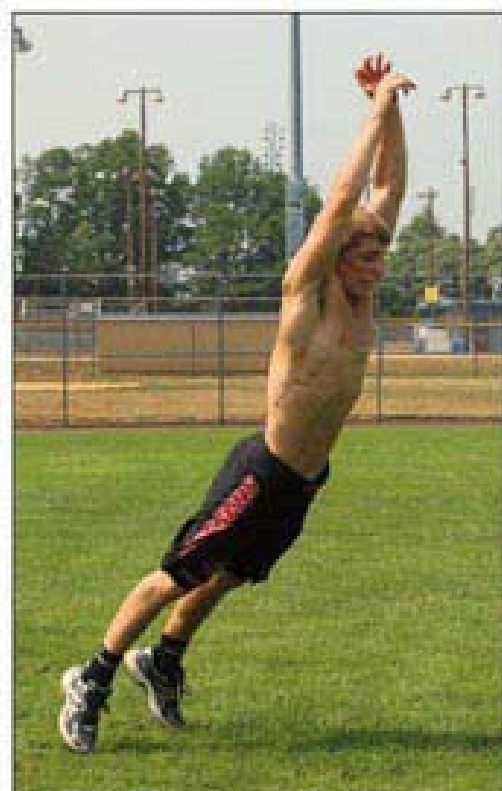
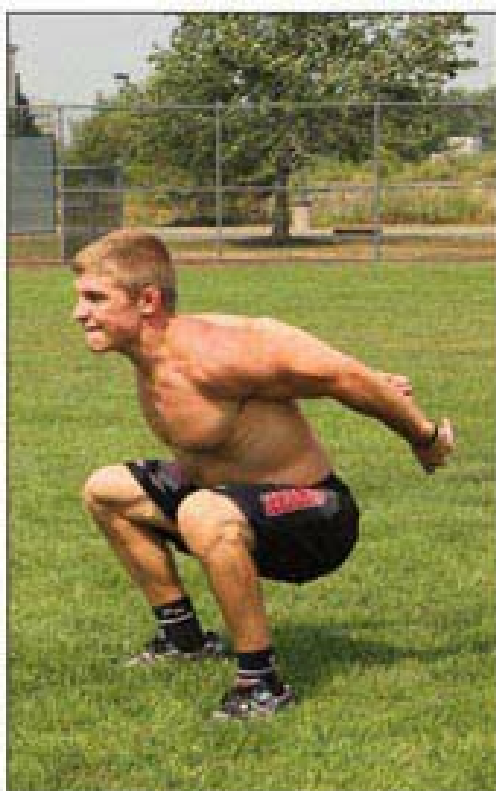
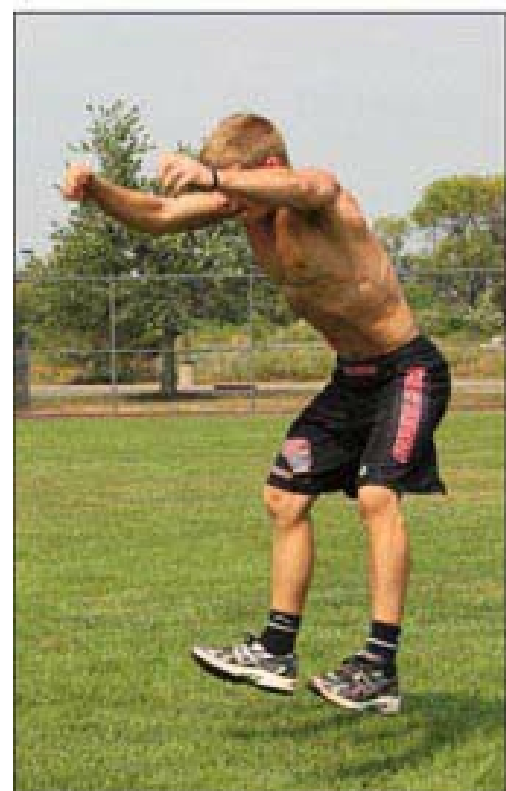
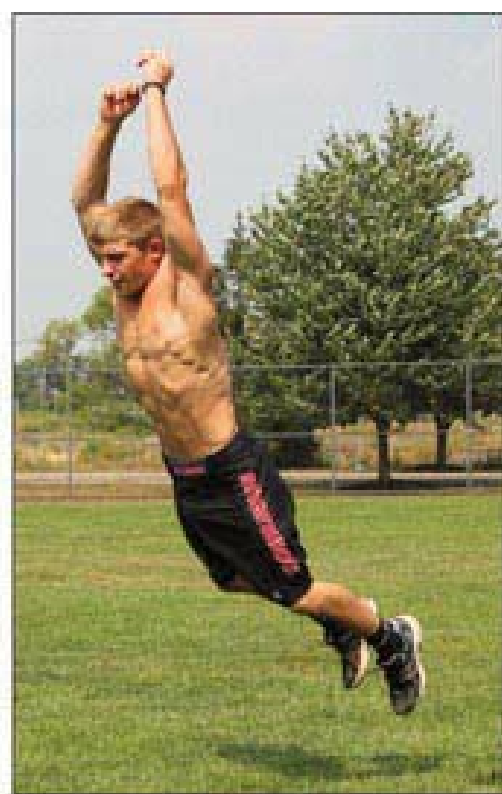
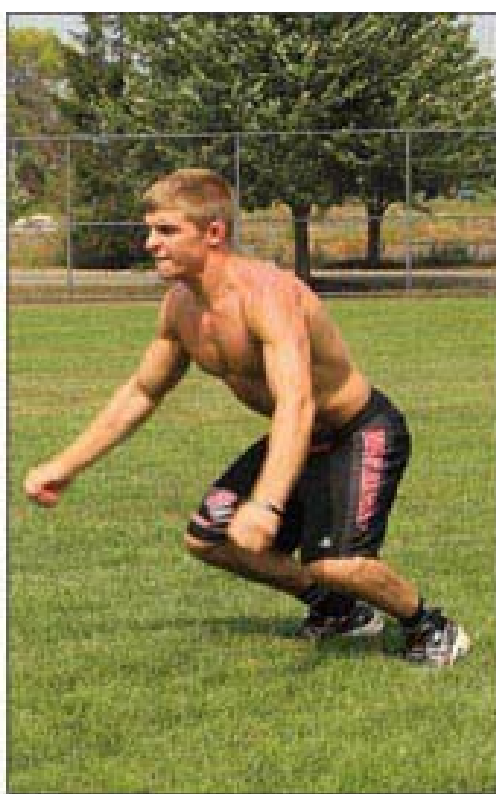
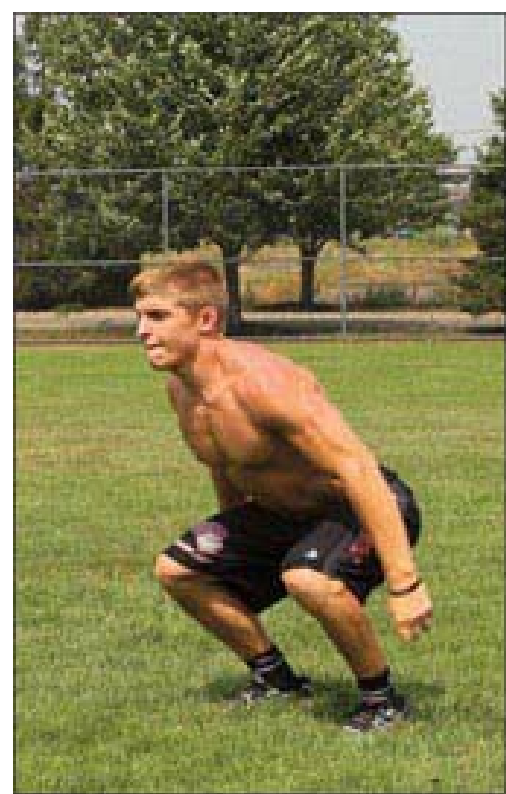
This pushup is a blend of the bear crawl and a push up. Crawl forward and allow one knee to travel to your elbow, then drop into a push up. Travel as naturally and smoothly as possible once you get this technique down.



BROAD JUMP

As you are feeling more warmed up and your mind and body are getting hyped up for the training, you are ready to hit some jumps. Begin the first rep standing tall with your arms overhead.

Swing your arms down and behind you quickly while pushing your hips back. You will feel your hamstrings and entire posterior engaged. Quickly throw your arms forward and perform your broad jump for maximum distance. Upon landing, your arms will rapidly swing back and then forward to send you into your next broad jump. 2 - 5 reps in a row is optimal here.



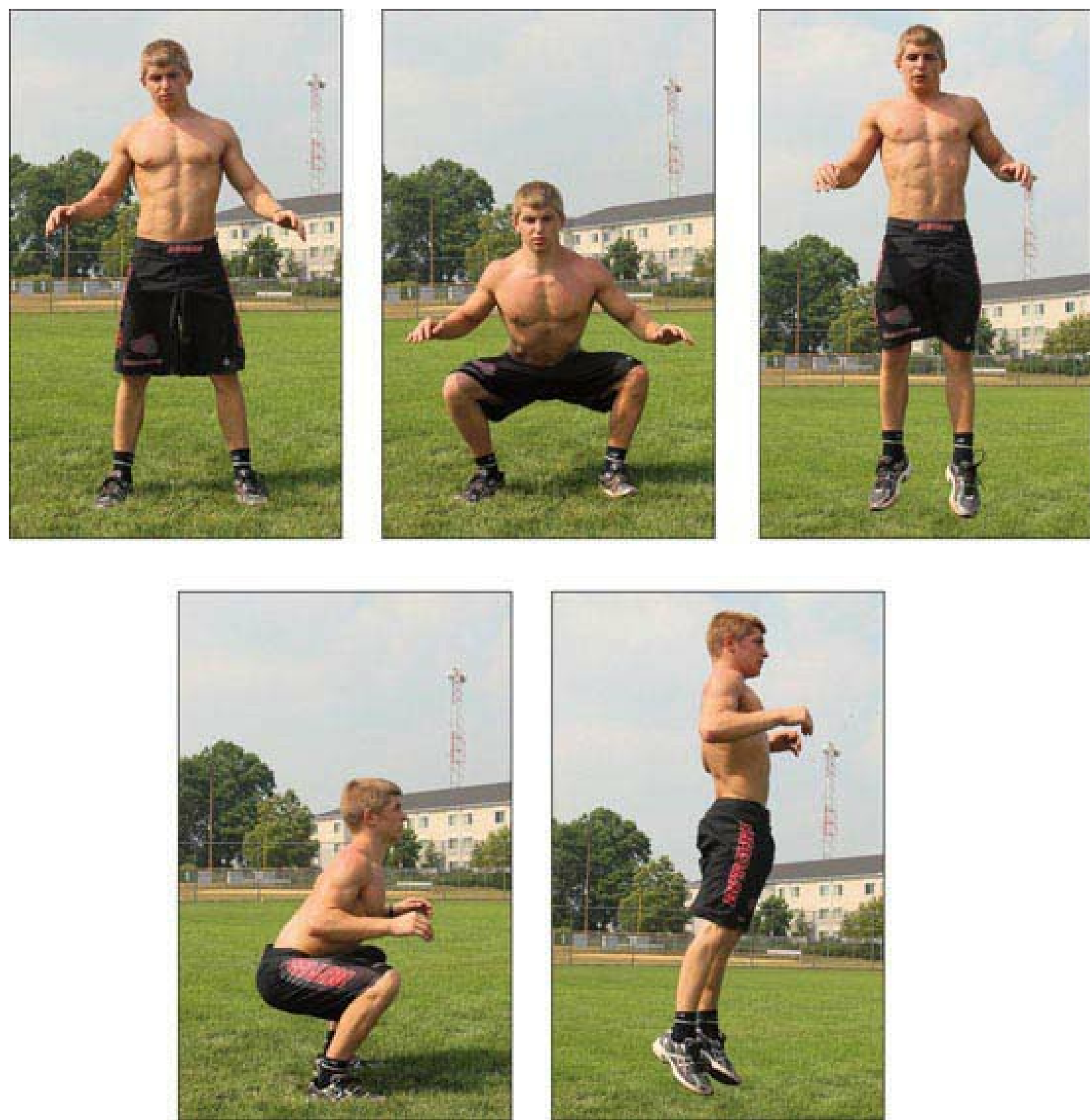
Broad Jump shown here in full extension.

SQUAT JUMP

Squat down and aggressively and vertically jump out of your squat. Land smoothly while sitting back as you normally would during a squat. Drop into a half or slightly above parallel squat and explode upward with maximum height for prescribed reps. Keep your

chest tall, hips back, and knees out. Do not allow your hands to touch your legs.

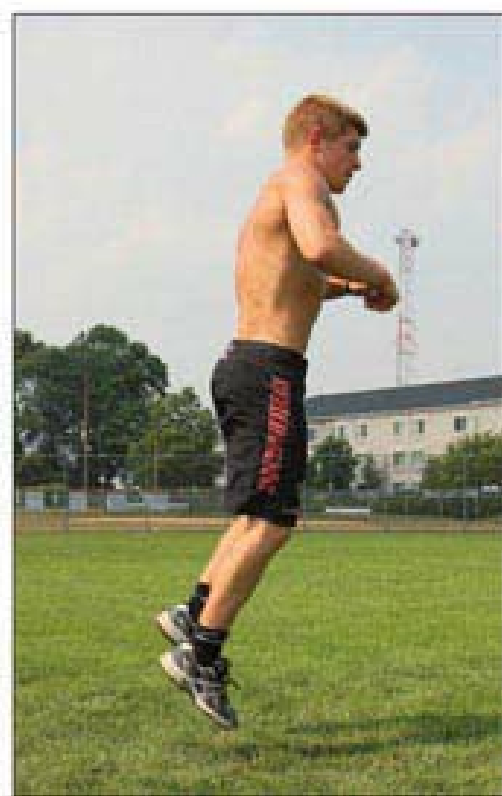
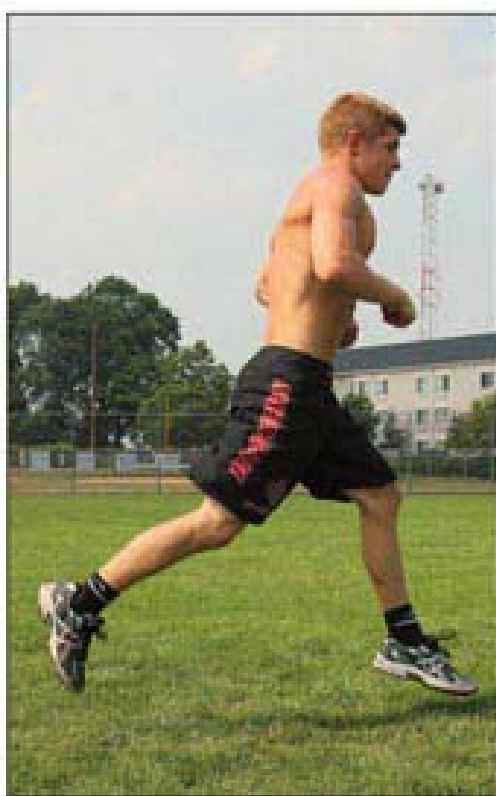
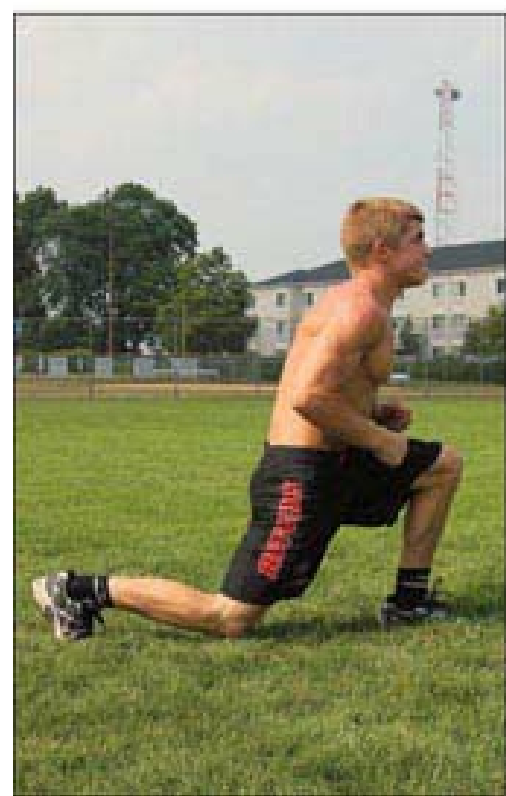
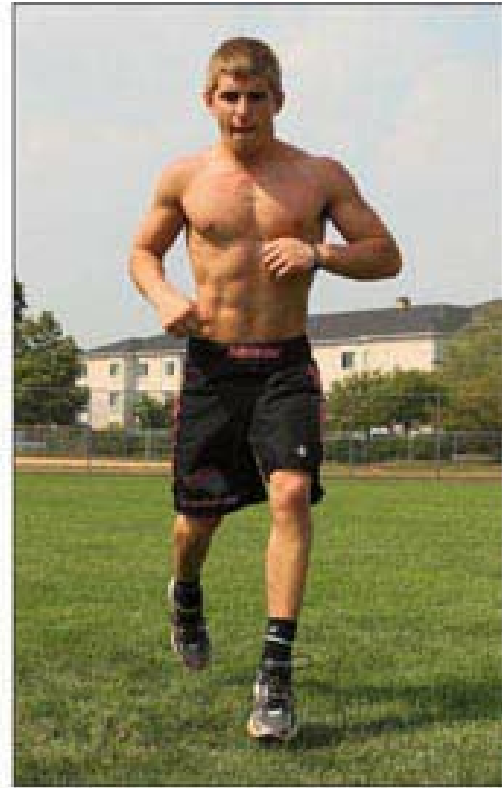
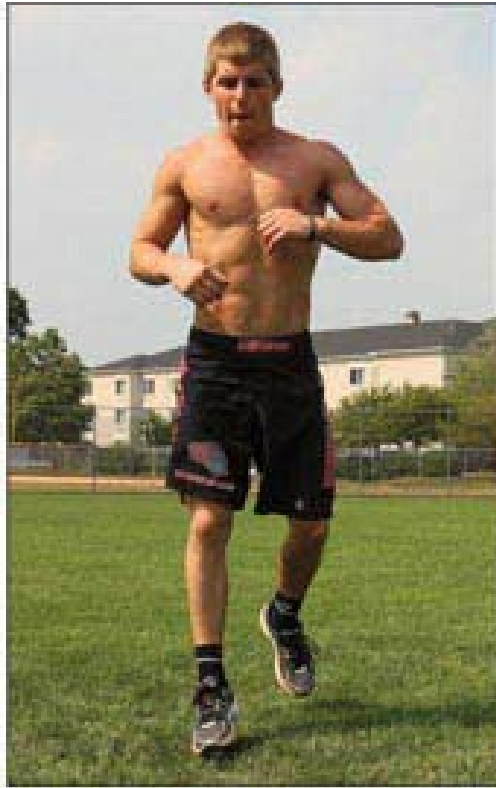
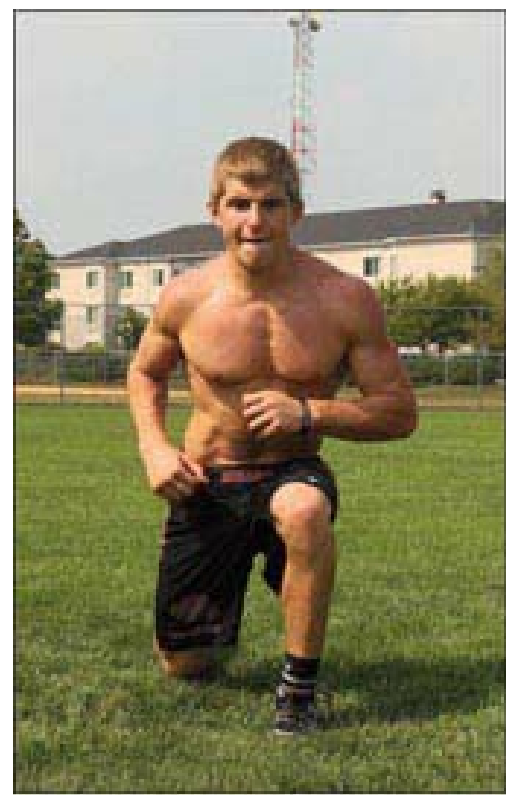
Common faults here are dropping the chest, rounding the back, caving the knees, and placing the hands on legs. Technique is # 1, always.



LUNGE JUMP

Begin in the bottom position of the lunge. It is optional to swing your arms on the

jumping phase. Explode upward for maximum height, and then switch your front leg to the back leg & vice versa. Be careful not to allow your back knee to hit the ground. Keep your abs engaged and posture tall. There should be no slouching and no hands on the legs.

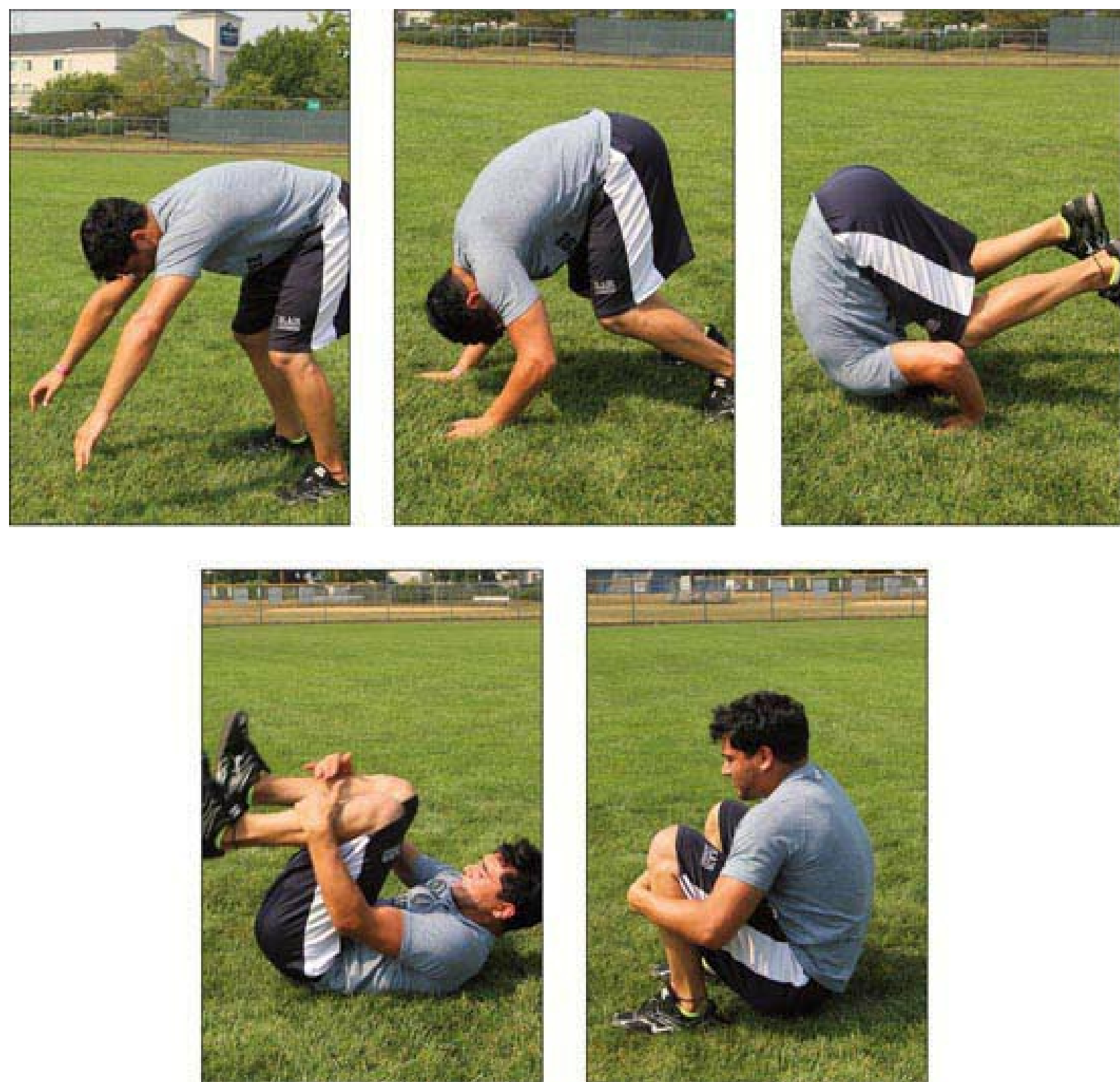


SIMPLE ROLL

Crouch down and place your hands on the floor in front of you. Tuck your chin to the chest and curl your body into the shape of a ball by looking at your stomach. Bend your

elbows and roll forward.

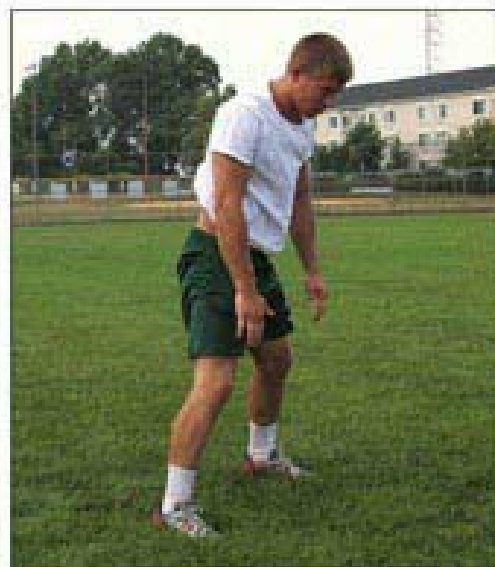
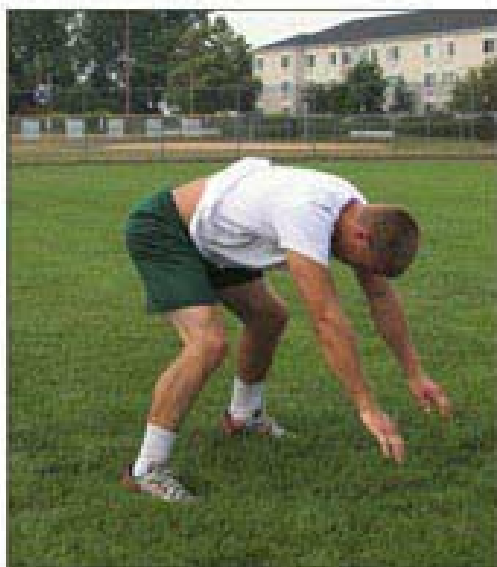
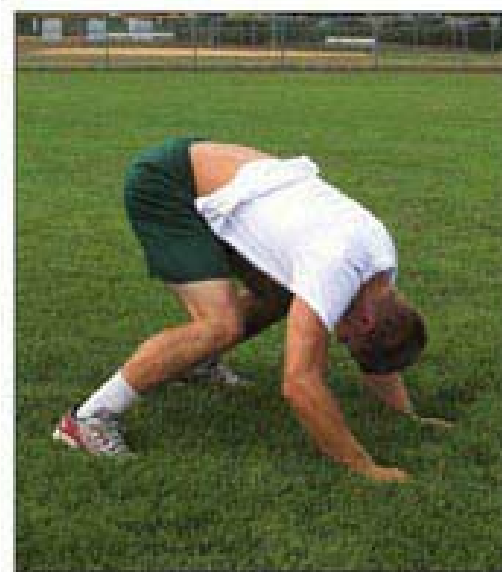
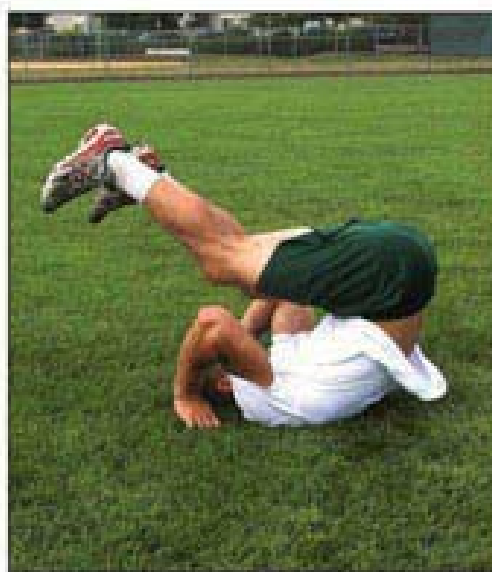
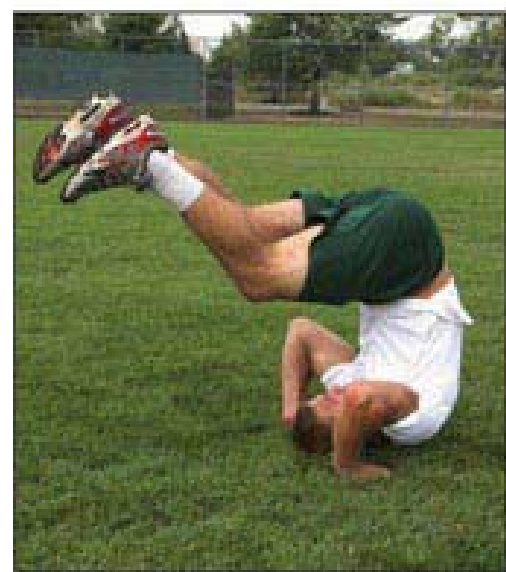
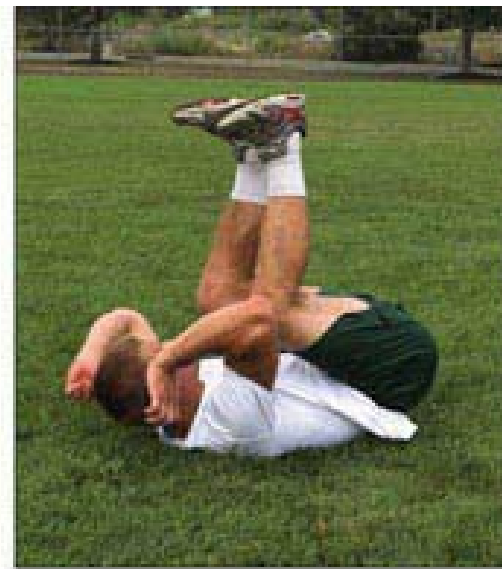
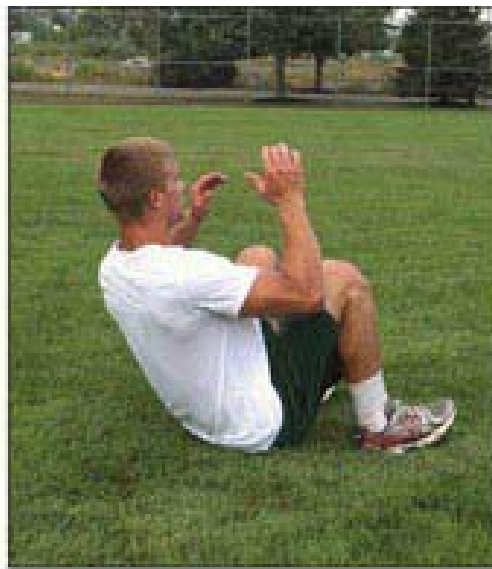
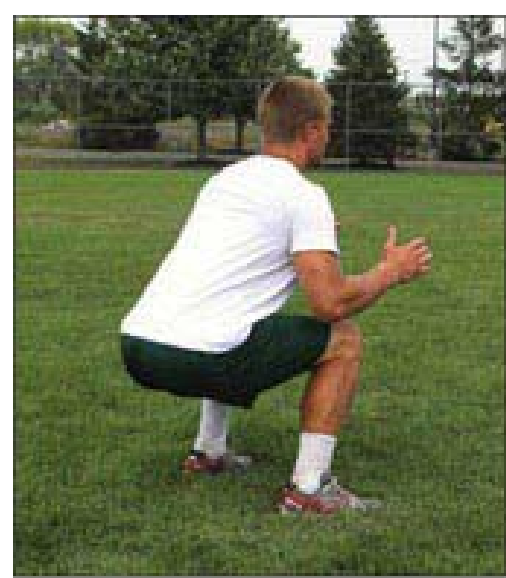
A common mistake is to uncurl your body and land flat on your back, or to not tuck the chin and roll on the head. This can be dangerous for athletes who do not have adequate neck strength. Do not roll on your head. Always curl yourself into the shape of a ball.



BACK ROLL

Crouch down & tuck your chin, placing your hands in front of your shoulders as if you were in the rack position with a barbell. Keep your hands facing up as you roll backwards.

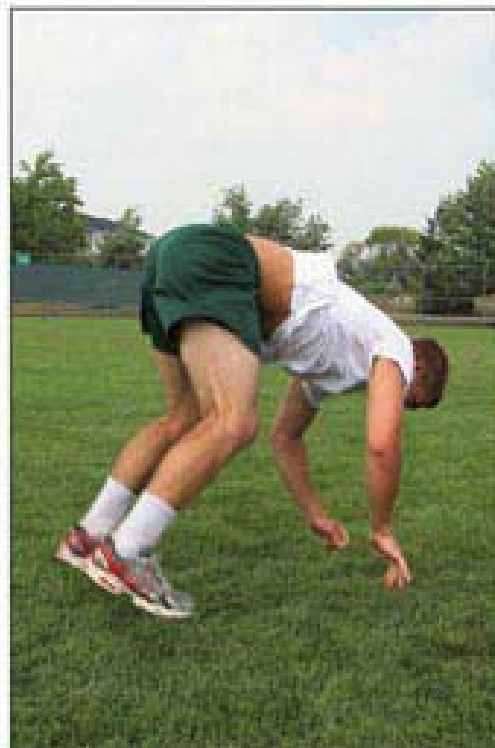
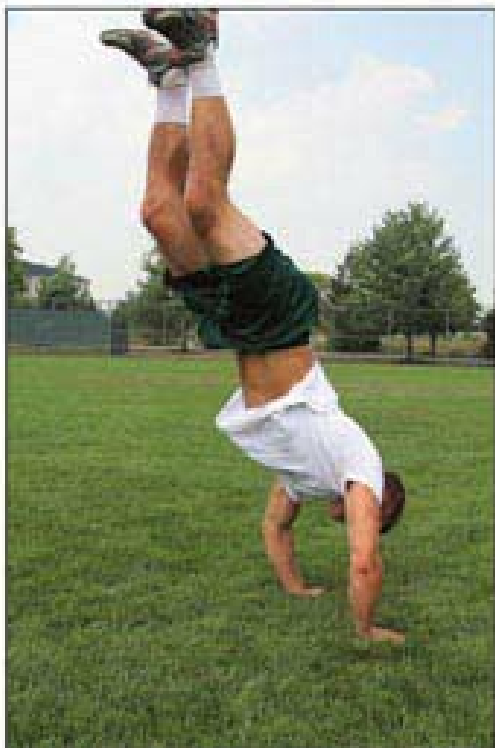
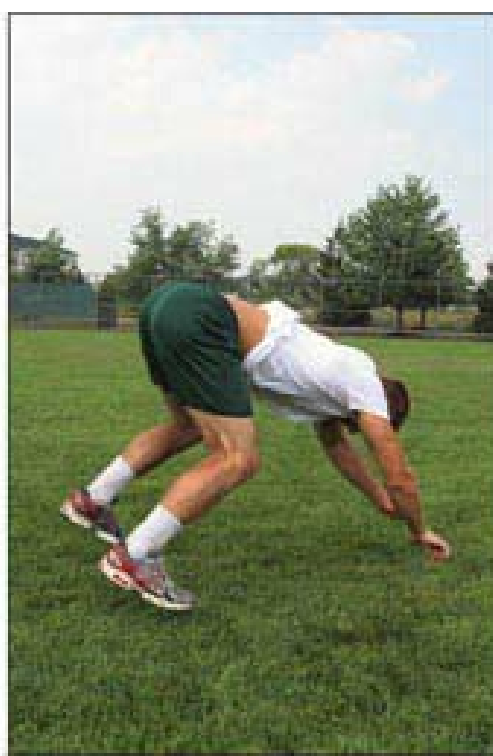
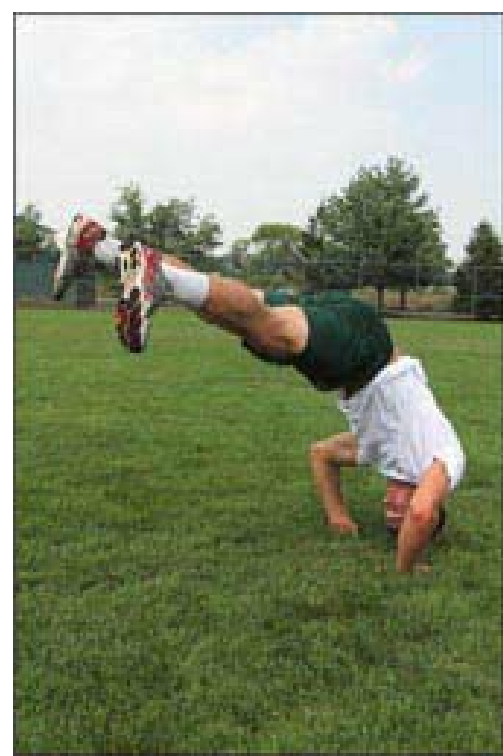
Your hands & palms will touch the floor as your legs push behind you. Use your arms to assist you and push you through the back roll. If your legs are pointing up, you will stall and get stuck in the back roll. You want your legs to travel behind you to aid in the momentum.



BACK EXTENSION

As your back roll feels smoother and stronger, start using your arms to push you more aggressively through the backward roll. This will look like a back roll transitioning into a handstand. Land smoothly on your feet, not on your knees. As your strength improves, your back extension can become plyometric in nature, where you explosively push off the ground and kick your legs back, giving you more power from your upper body.

Common faults on the back roll and back extension are to fall to one shoulder and favor one side. You will see this athlete pushing with one hand from the palm and the other hand from the back of the hand. Again, maintain balance and keep your palms up and in front of the shoulder. Your legs will travel directly behind you in a straight line.

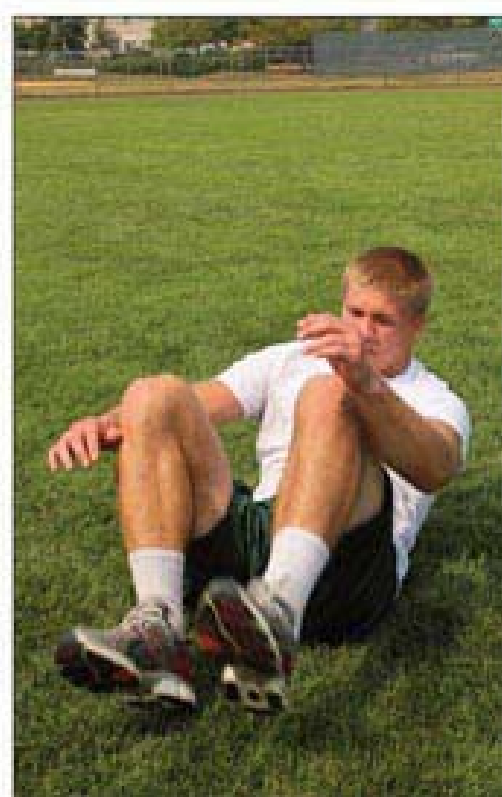
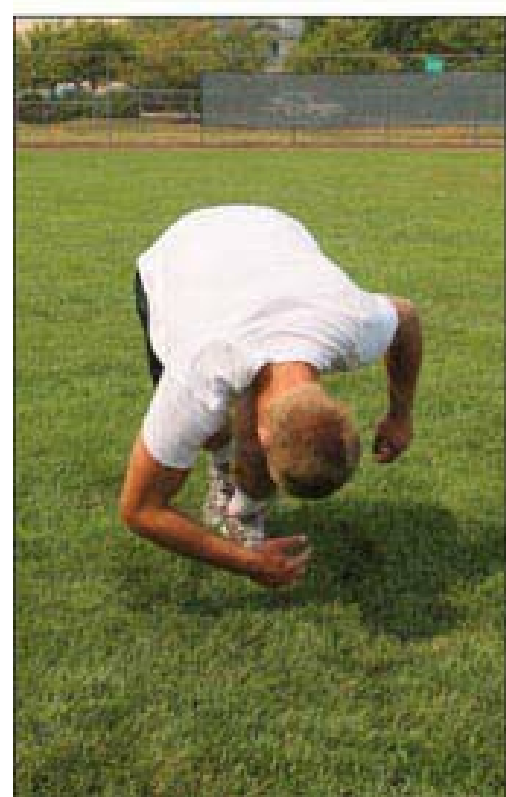
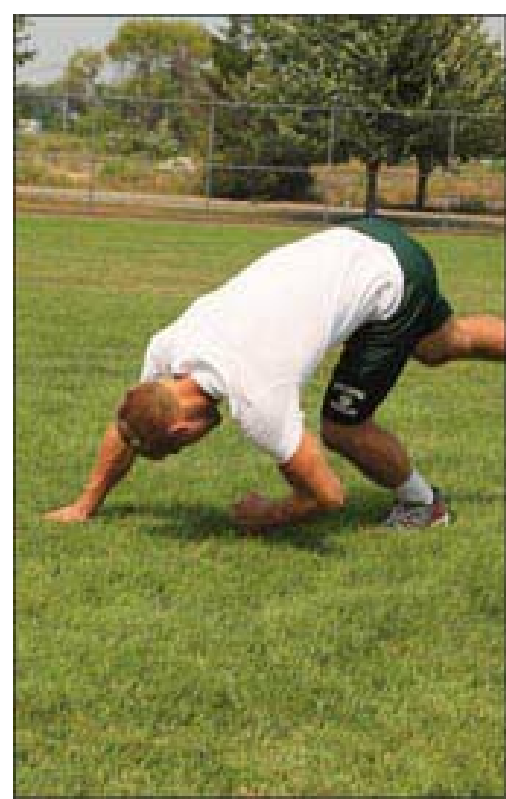


SHOULDER ROLL

This is similar to the forward roll, but rather than rolling to both shoulders, you will roll to one shoulder. The shoulder roll is commonly used in combat sports such as wrestling & Sambo. In addition, the shoulder roll is important for learning how to fall & recover quickly, which can be of use beyond traditional sports.

When performing the shoulder roll to the right side, crouch down low and direct your head and right arm to travel diagonally, as if you were trying to move your right arm and your head under your left lat. Your body will roll diagonally across your back, yet you will

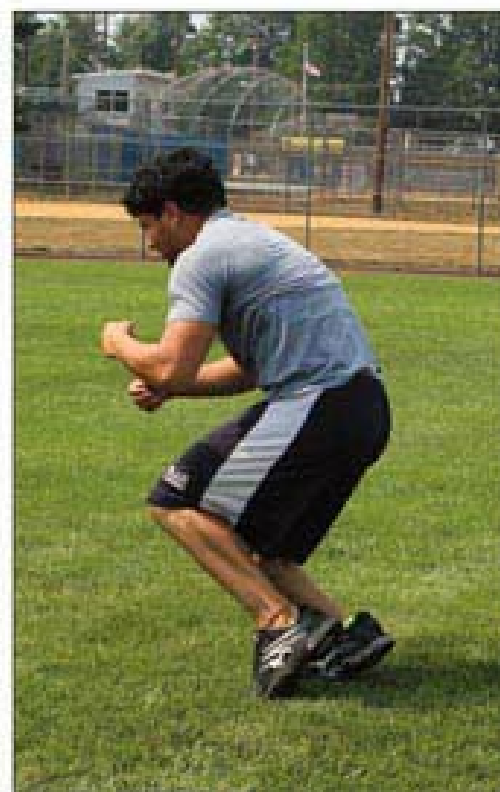
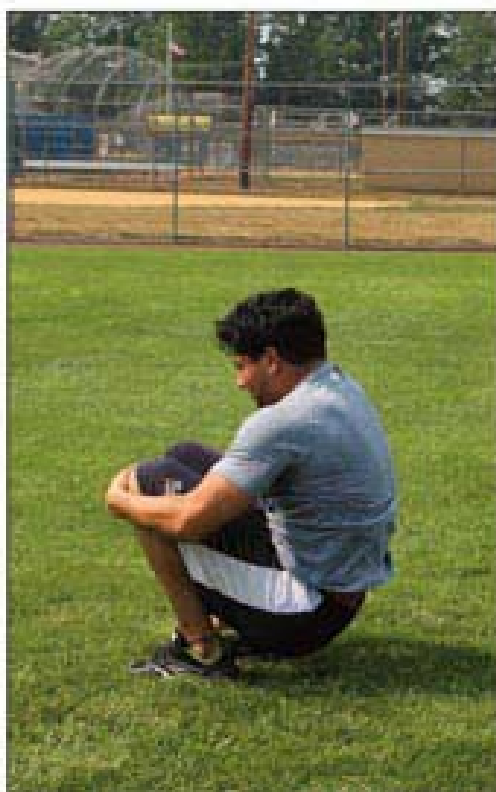
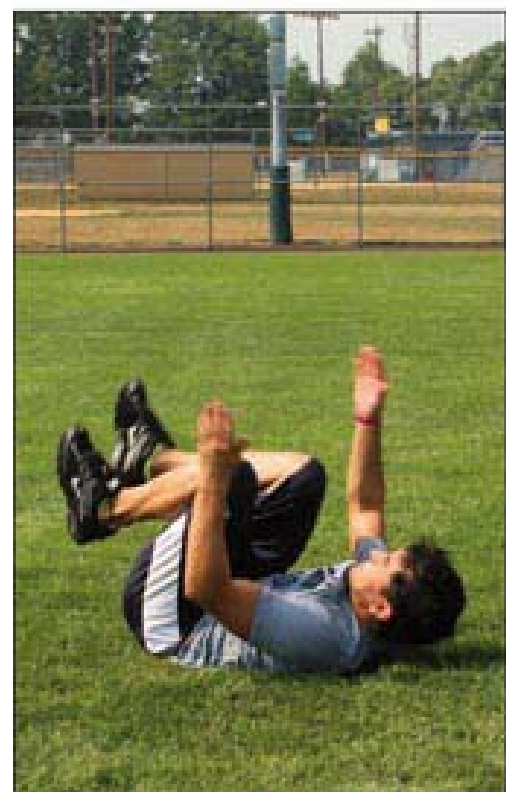
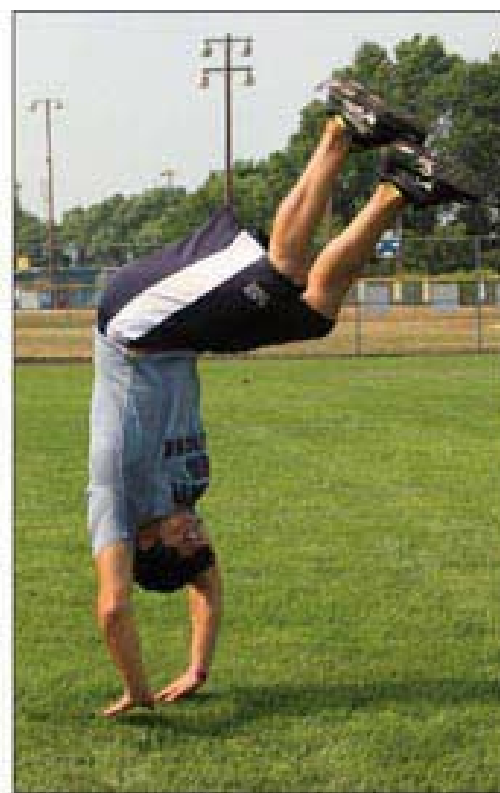
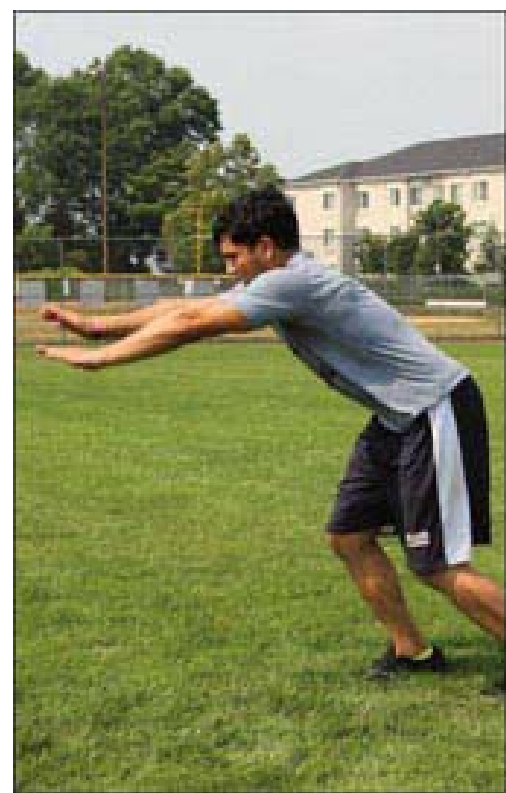
still travel in a straight line. Practice an equal number of shoulder rolls On each side.



DIVE ROLL

Take a few steps and pretend you are diving over an obstacle and into a pool. At first, don't dive for maximum height. Instead, practice by getting only a small dive from your legs. Once your hands touch the floor, bend your elbows and tuck your chin and body like you normally would in a forward roll. Smoothly transition into your forward roll and

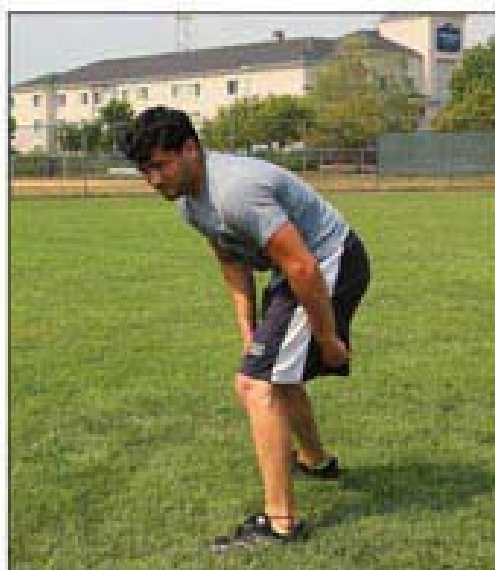
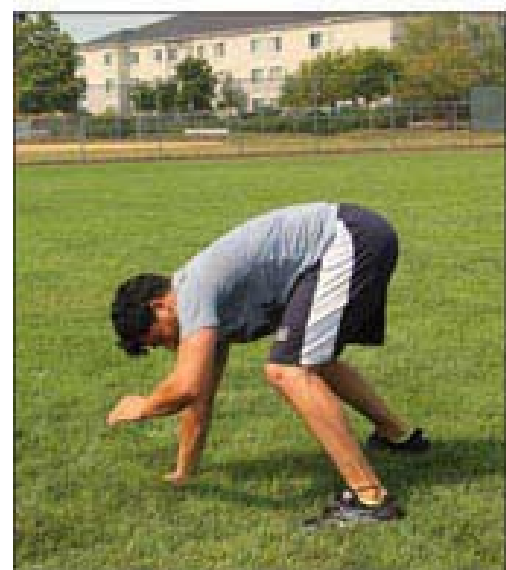
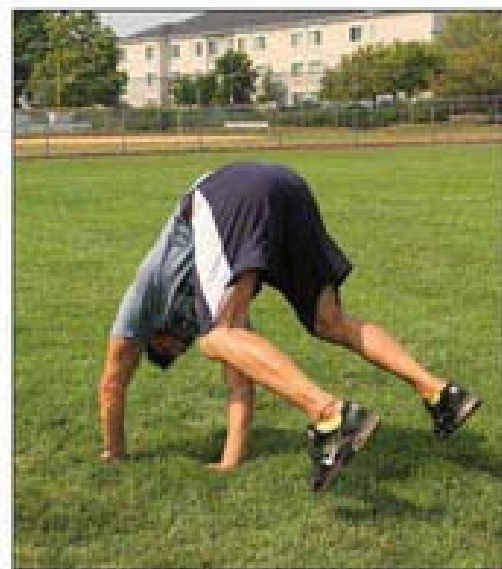
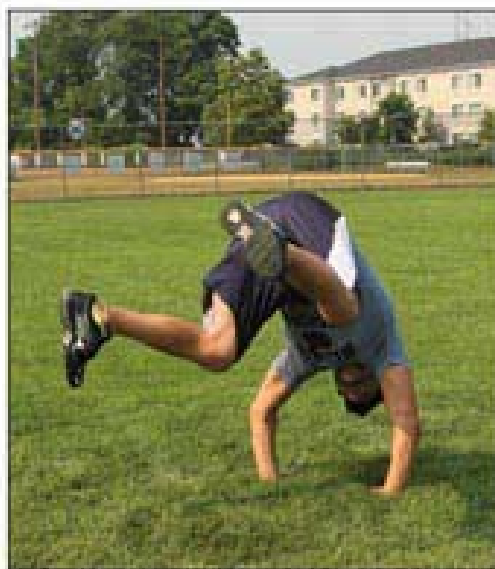
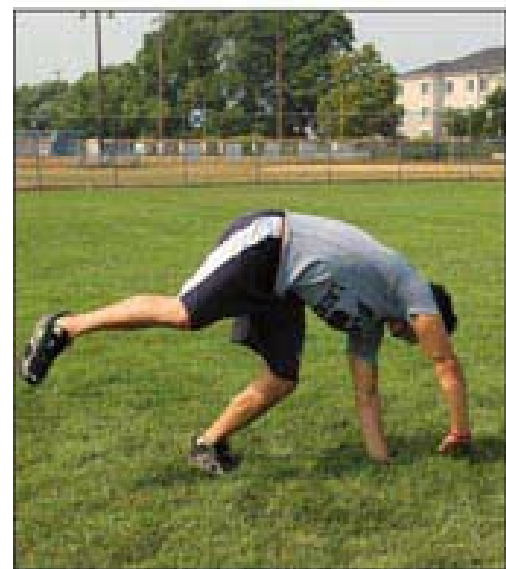
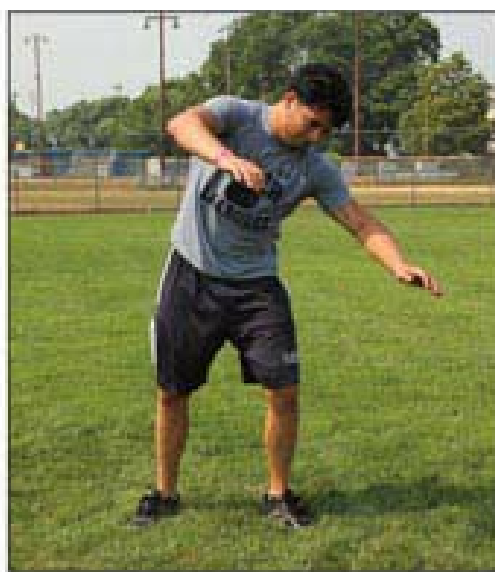
finish by standing up.



BABY CARTWHEEL

The cartwheel is a four-count movement: hand, hand, foot, foot. The baby cartwheel helps athletes who are nervous and lack coordination. Rather than pressing the individual to get his legs up high, we crouch down and perform the baby cartwheel or "low cartwheel." I recommend performing 5 reps leading with the left hand, then 5 reps leading

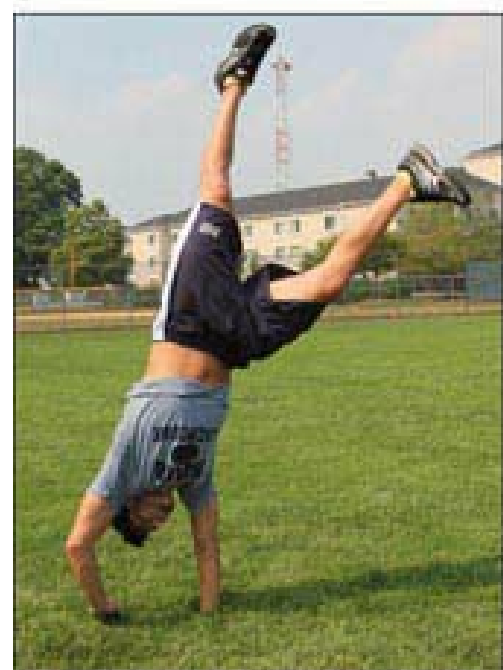
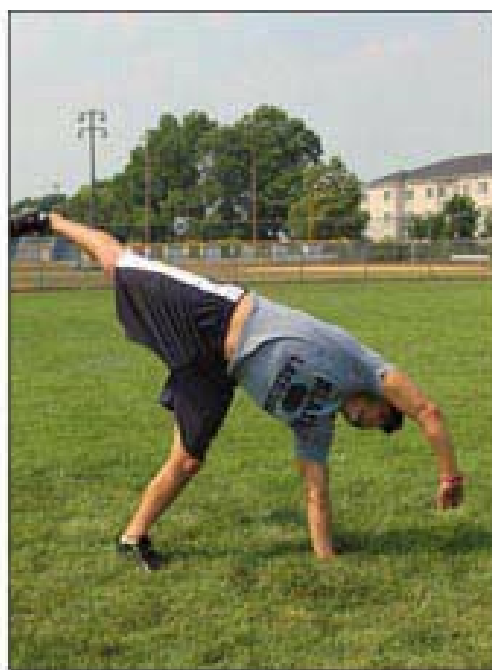
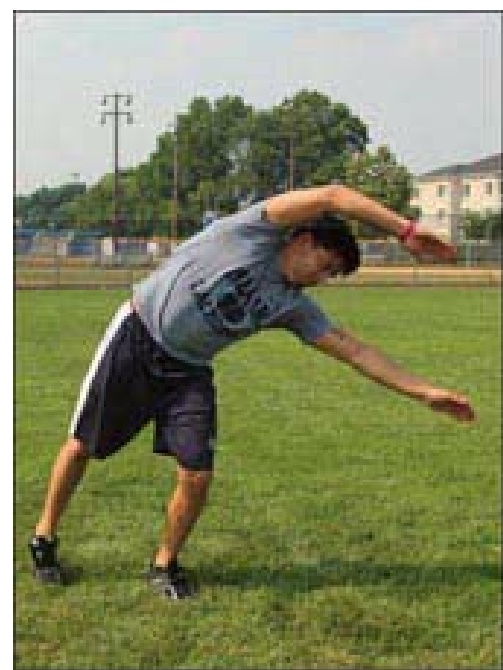
with the right hand. This way you are practicing balance from the get-go, rather favoring only one side.



CARTWHEEL

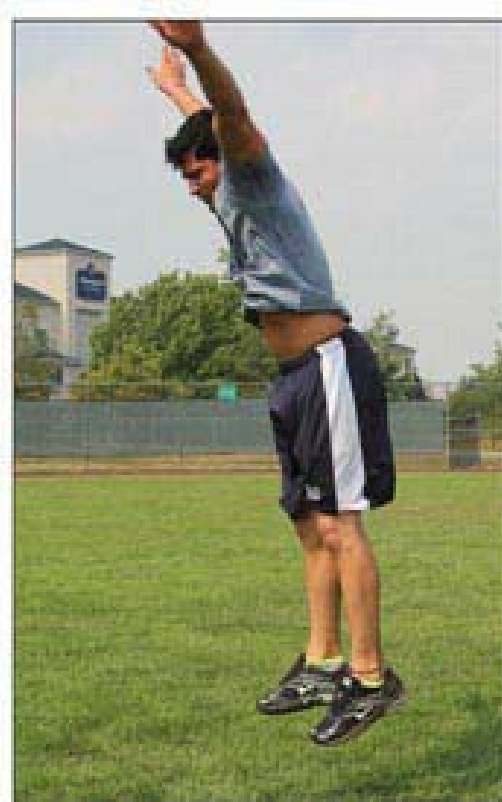
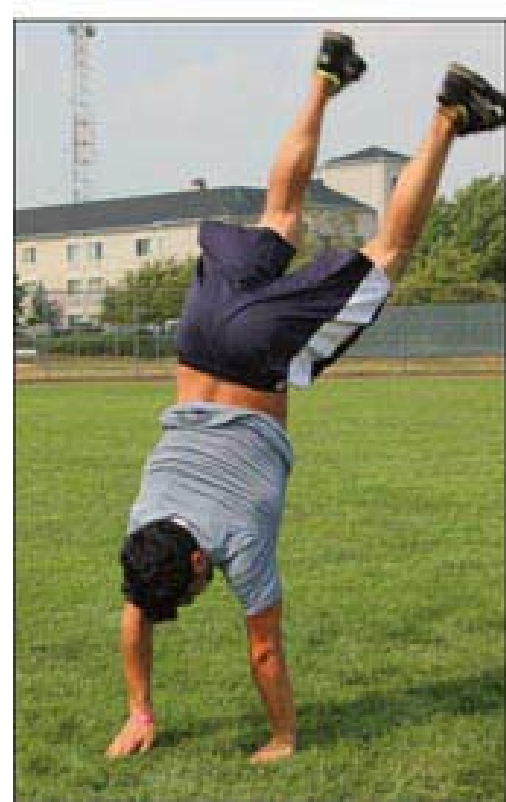
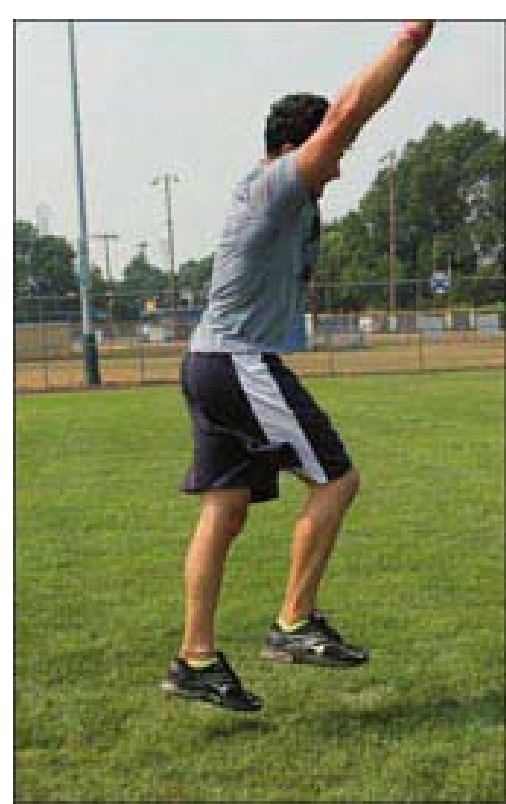
Once you feel more confident, perform a regular cartwheel again, as a 4-count exercise where your land on one hand then the other hand, then one foot, then the other foot. Try to keep your legs as straight as possible, as well your arms. Your body should travel in one line like a windmill, where your arms, torso and legs remain in alignment.

Common faults: Bending the arms or bending one arm and falling to your knees rather than landing on your feet. Your arms are your support in the cartwheel. I've seen many athletes have one strong or competent side while being unable to perform a cartwheel to the other side. Rather than landing on their feet, they will land on one or both knees. Same goes for the arms. Rather than being able to lock out both arms, one arm will bend and the athlete will collapse to his elbow and forearm. The cartwheel is a great indicator of coordination and athleticism as well as helping identify if the individual has one strong side over the other.



ROUND OFF

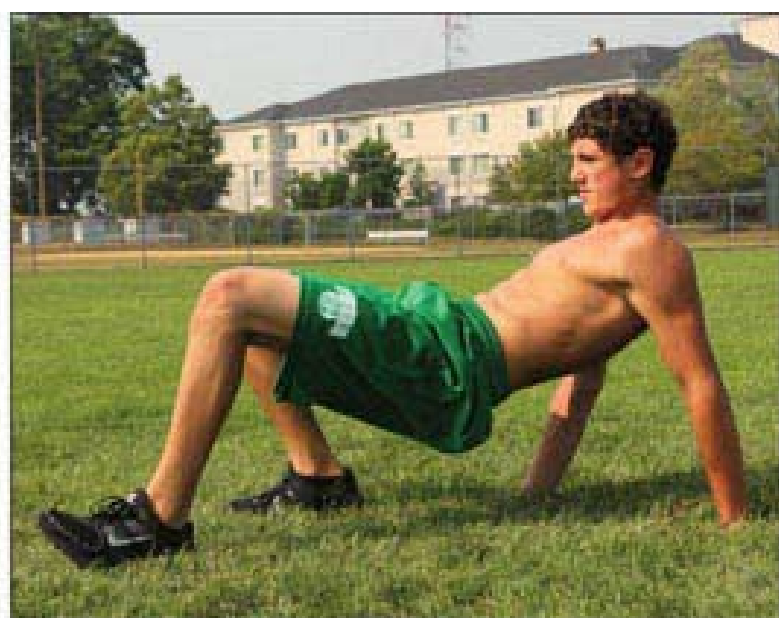
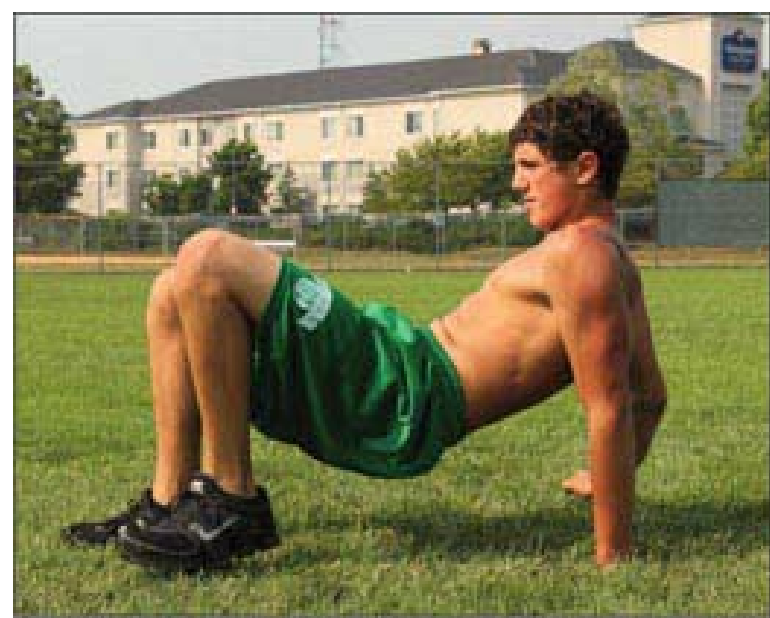
The roundoff is the explosive variation of the cartwheel, and is a 3-count movement: hand, hand, feet. The feet will now land together. As the legs are in the air, the feet will meet together while over your head and land together. You can begin this exercise with a jog or even a run as your confidence and coordination increase.



CRAB WALK

We perform these in all directions: forwards, backwards, left, and right. Do not allow your butt to touch the floor.

Common fault is not keeping the shoulder stable, so on each step with the hands you will notice the shoulders jamming up towards the individual's ears. We want the shoulders to be tight rather than loose.



CRAB STRETCH

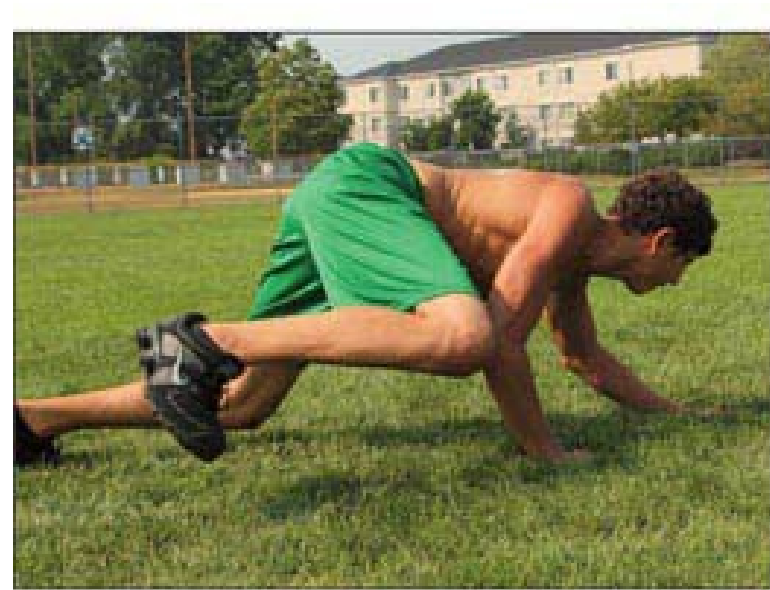
In the crab walk position, simply raise your hips as high as you can and hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. These can be done with bent legs or straight legs. You can also vary your hand positions while holding the stretch.



BEAR CRAWL

With hands and feet on the ground, drop your hips so your butt is not in the air and your

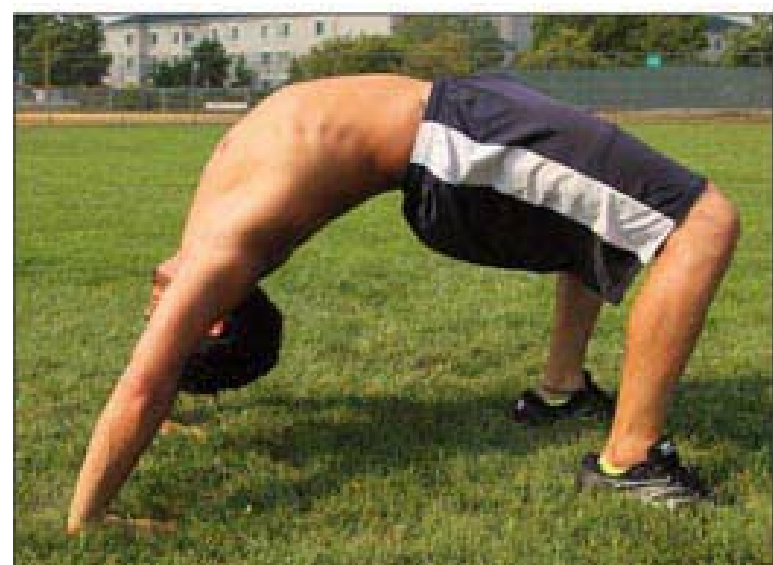
back is parallel or near parallel to the floor. Engage your abs by squeezing them as you drop your hips. You should feel pressure on the legs and upper body. Travel forward with the hands and feet, while bringing your knees outside of your elbows. Like all our animal crawls, move in all directions to work the body from different angles while improving coordination and athleticism.



BRIDGE

Begin by lying on your back with your legs and arms bent, palms to floor. Press into the ground with your feet and hands and extend your arms as far as you can. Depending on

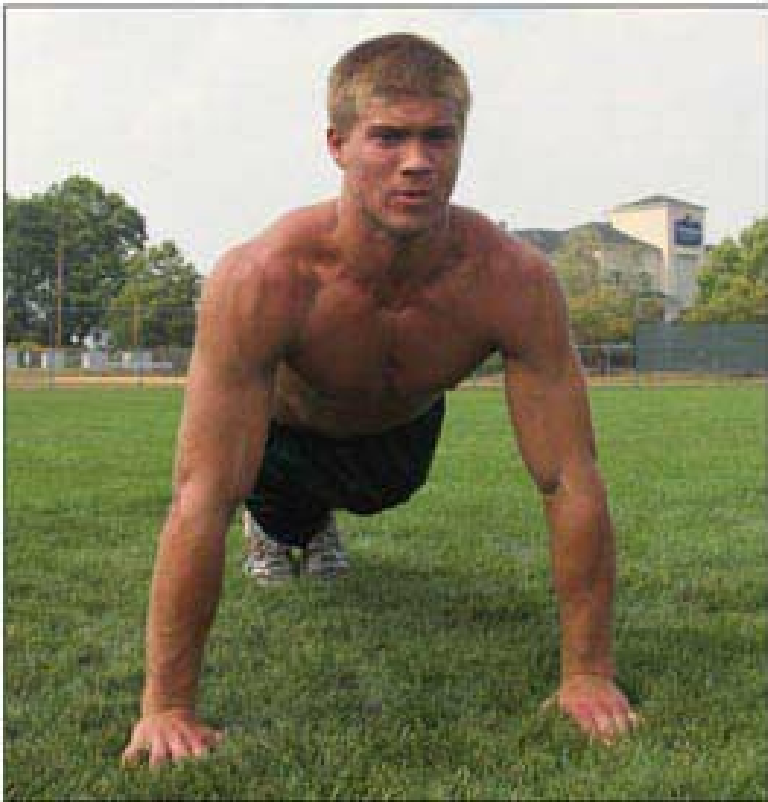
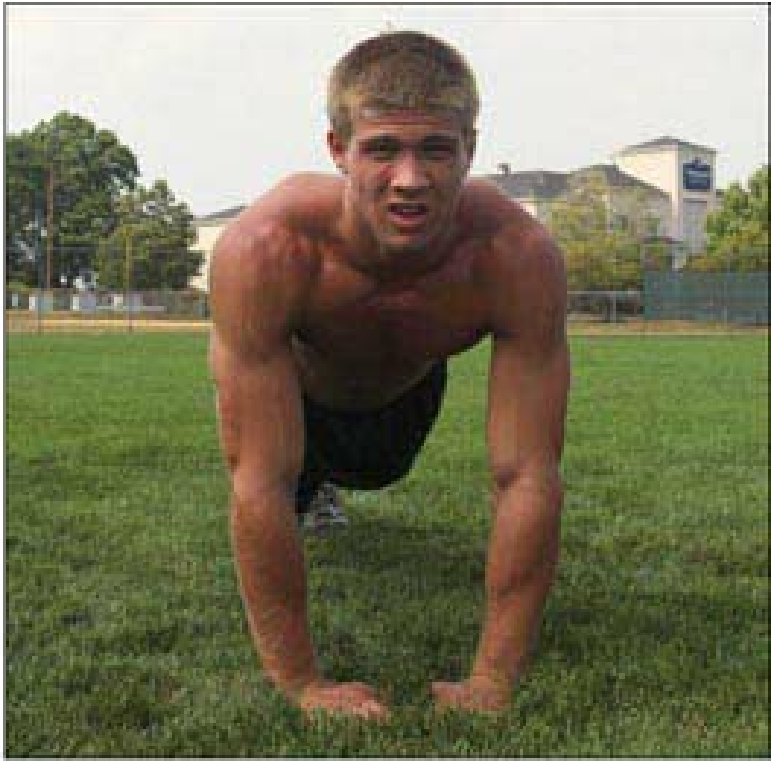
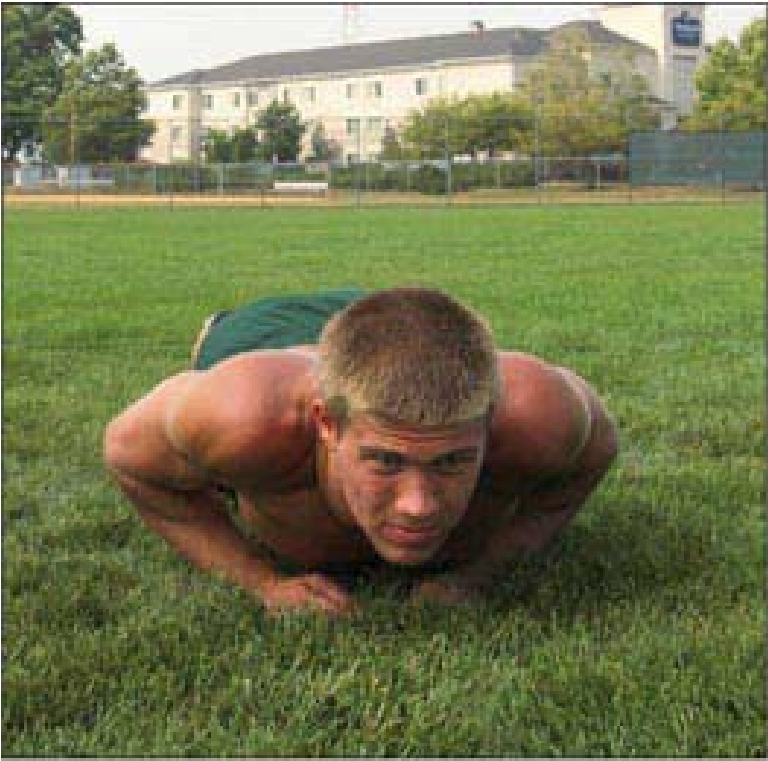
your mobility, you will have some limitations here. Hold your bridge for as long as you can with proper technique. Advanced bridges (as shown in the lower right image) can be performed by moving around and even lifting up one leg and/or one hand.



CLOSE GRIP PUSH UP

Bring your hands in closer than shoulder-width and engage your entire body. Your hands should be directly under your shoulders, with your feet and heels together. Your legs, glutes, and torso should be rigid and engaged. Descend until your chest touches your hands or the floor and press back up so your arms are fully locked out. Your body should remain in a straight line on the way up.

Common faults: Sagging the abs or performing half reps, either half way down or half way up.



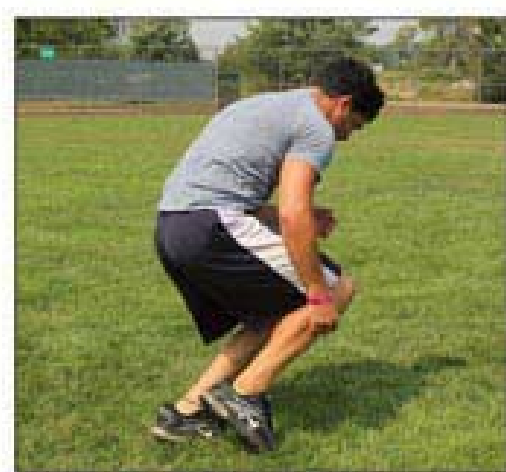
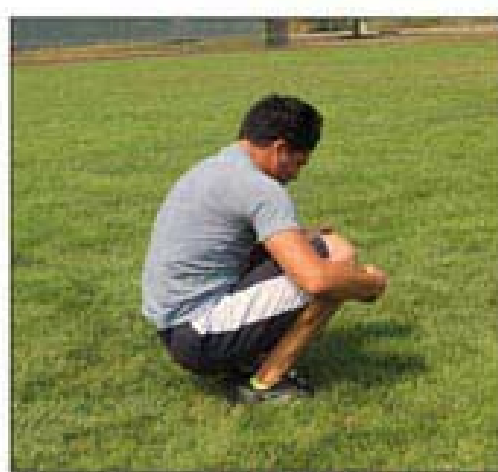
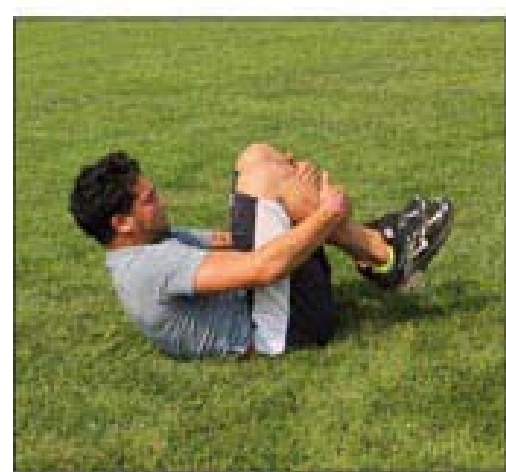
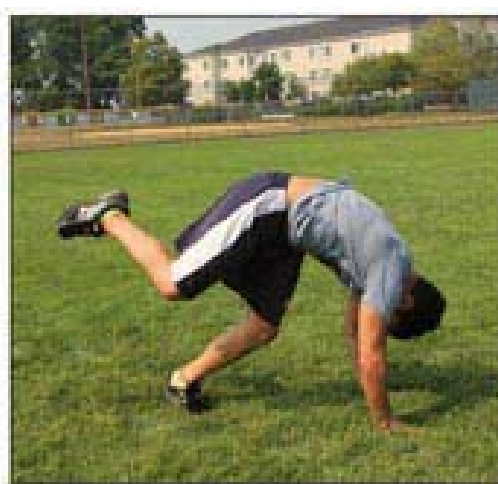
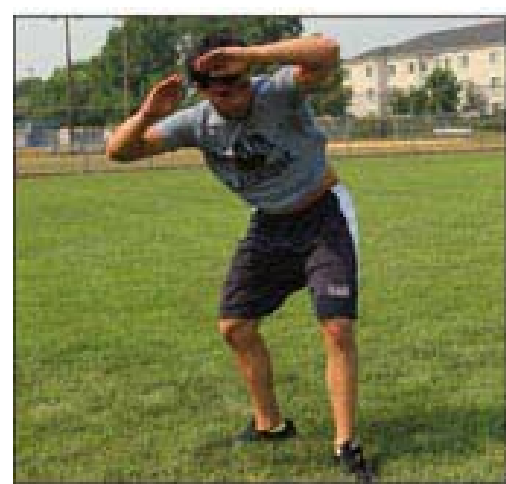
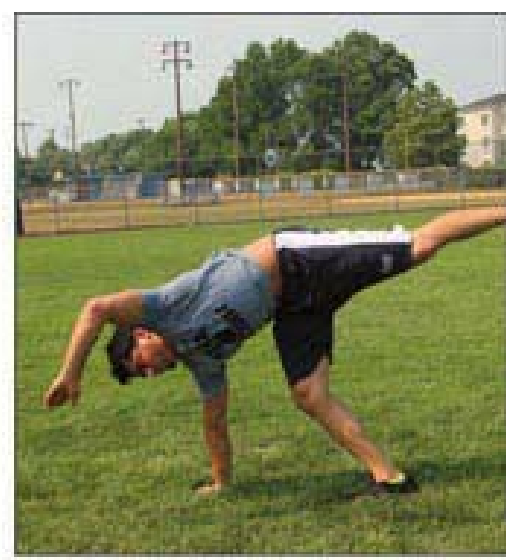
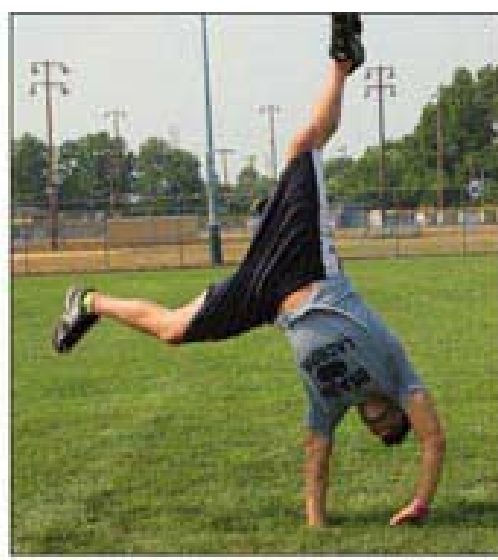
Vary your push ups to avoid overuse injuries.

Combo Warm-up Drills

As you gain proficiency and athleticism, it's time to combine two and even three gymnastics movements together to take your athleticism to the next level.

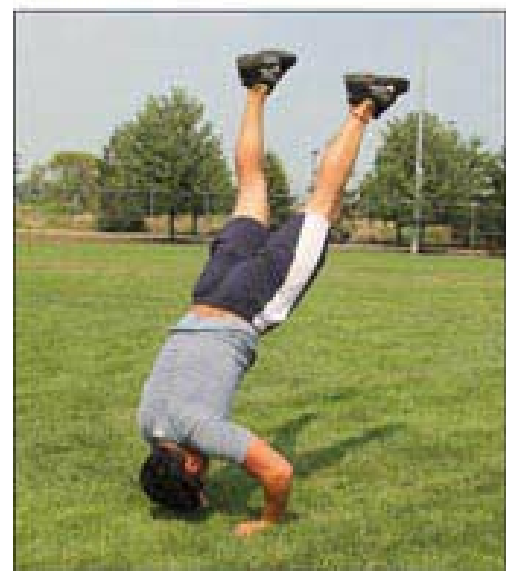
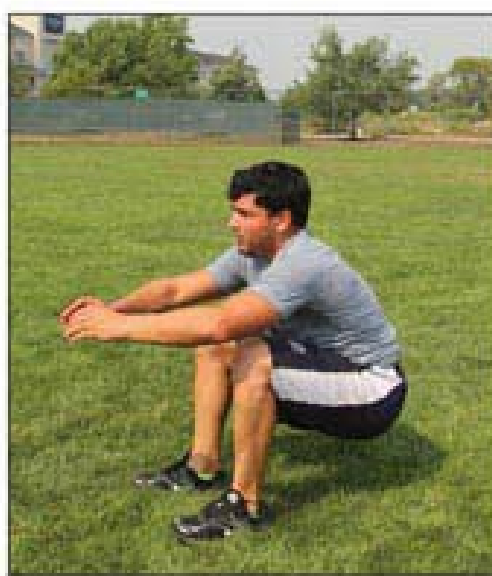
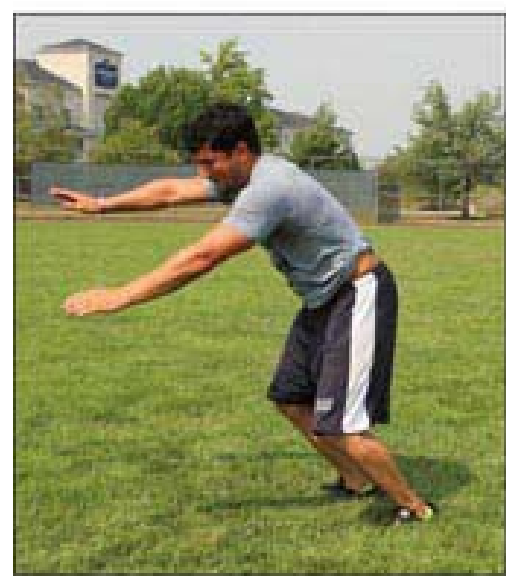
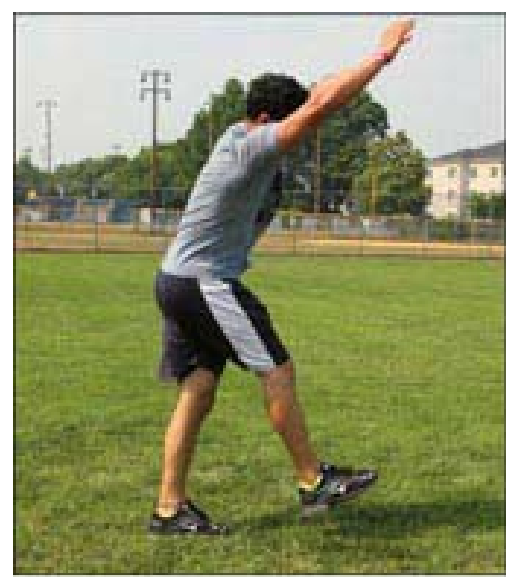
CARTWHEEL AND ROLL

Perform 1 cartwheel and transition into a forward roll or a shoulder roll. As always, I prefer seeing the lead hand used equally for cartwheels and shoulder rolls. Make sure you focus on starting with your non-dominant side to improve coordination. You can perform several reps leading with one side, and then equal reps to the other, or simply alternate the lead hand every rep.



ROUND OFF AND BACK EXTENSION

When performing a roundoff, you land in the start position of the back roll, so it is the perfect combo drill. As soon as you land from your roundoff, allow yourself to smoothly transition into the back roll and even better, the back extension.



CARTWHEEL AND BACK HANDSPRING

Oftentimes when I am training athletes either in the wrestling room or on the field, I give them an option to move "freestyle" with the gymnastics drills they just learned. The goal is to be in a state of flow, where they simply move and react without thinking or

hesitating. Very often these kids begin moving more explosively and get comfortable with their bodies in the air. This is called kinesthetic awareness. Some of them develop greater power, and are now able to perform back handsprings and even back flips coupled with cartwheels and roundoffs.





You should not do this unless you have been trained in these movements by an expert AND have a safe landing area.



Partner Warm-up Drills

WHEELBARROW CHECK

This is a great exercise for upper body strength, torso stability, and static strength of the adductors. To determine if you can truly squeeze your partner's hips you must let go of his ankles and see if the ankles remain tight and locked on your hips. If you cannot, I suggest improving abdominal strength slightly more before progressing into this exercise.

WHEELBARROW

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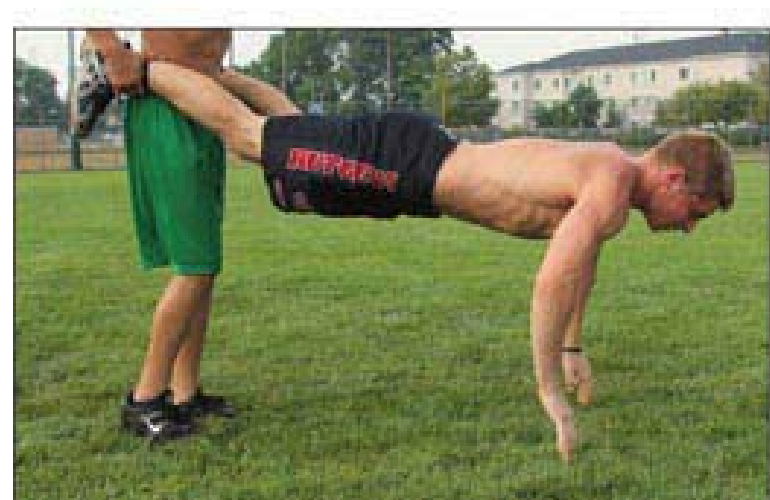


PARTNER PLYO PUSHUP

Keeping your ankles locked on your partner's hips, drop into a pushup and explode

forward and upward at the same time. Land with soft elbows, then absorb the descent and explode back up and forwards. I prefer hitting 3 - 5 plyo pushups followed by more hand walking. This is an advanced exercise.

Common faults: Performing this exercise before you are strong enough to safely do so, slamming your hands down in the ground upon landing, sagging at the trunk, and flaring the elbows. This exercise must be performed with excellent technique and low reps to ensure maximum safety and speed.



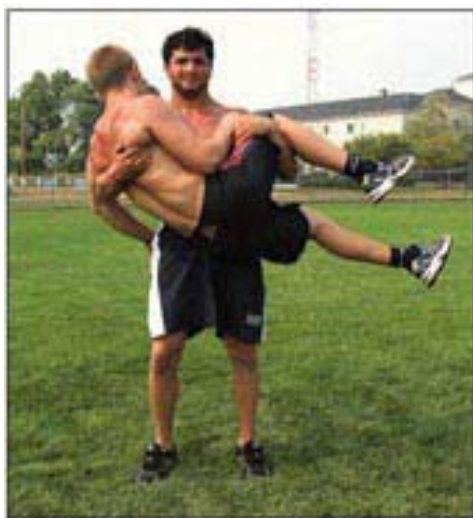
PIGGYBACK CARRY

Carrying a partner increases leg strength and back strength. We vary the positions we carry from standing upright to slightly squatting down, and even up grass hills or on the beach sand. All variations are different in their challenges. I prefer to avoid running unless you are advanced and have NO problem controlling your partner during a speed walk.

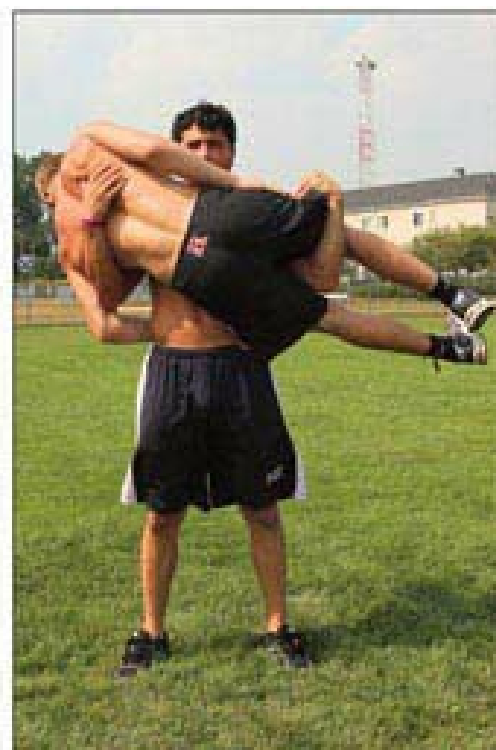
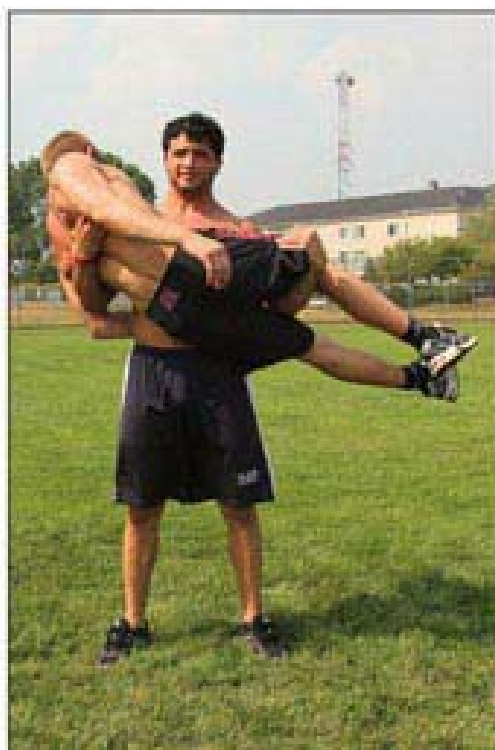
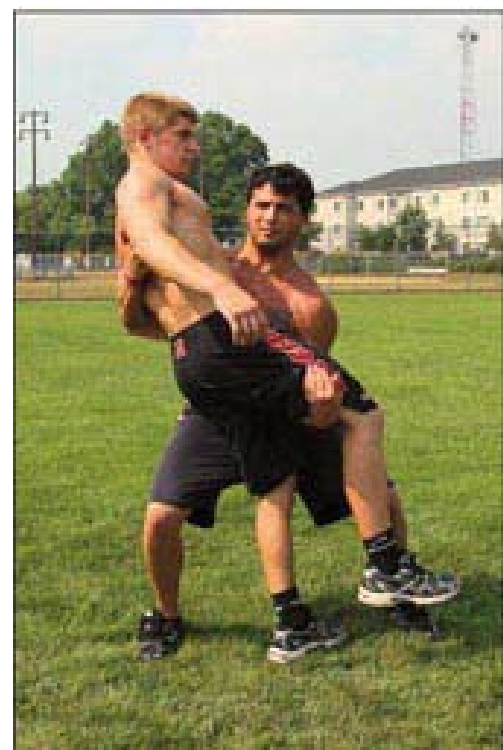


UNDERHOOK CARRY

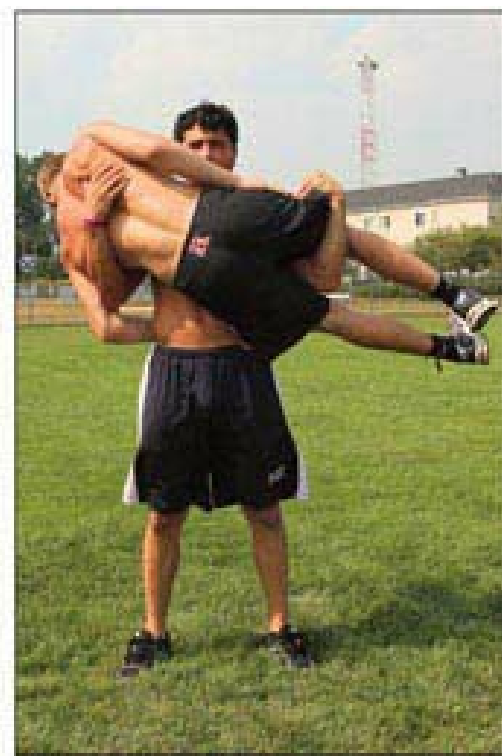
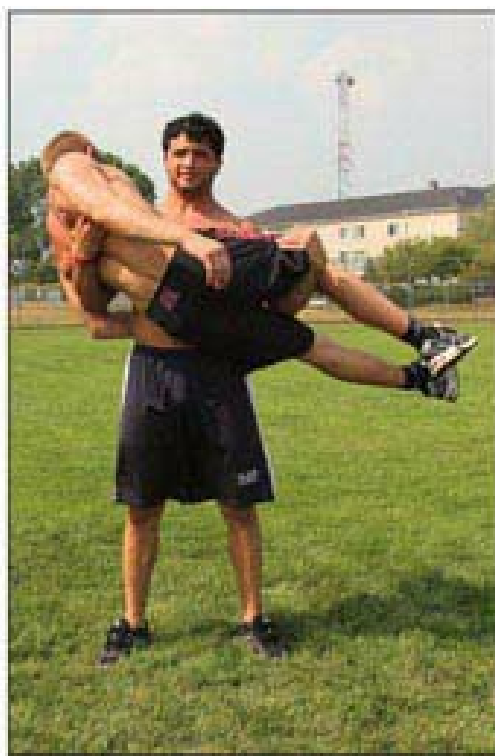
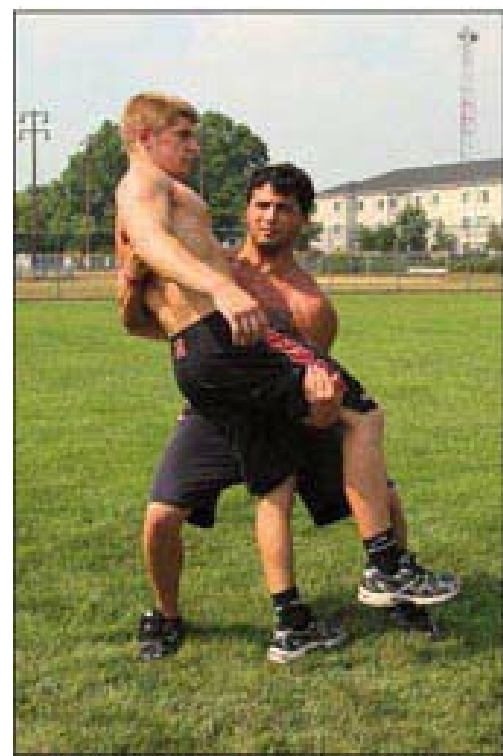
Place one arm under your partner's leg and one arm across his back and lat. Your partner should remain rigid so you can carry him like a log, with your palms facing up in the curl position.



WRONG. BOTH athletes must remain rigid.



Common Faults: Partner sags his body and hangs limp on you. You drop your arms, lean back, and break your posture. BOTH athletes must remain rigid.



UNDERHOOK SQUAT

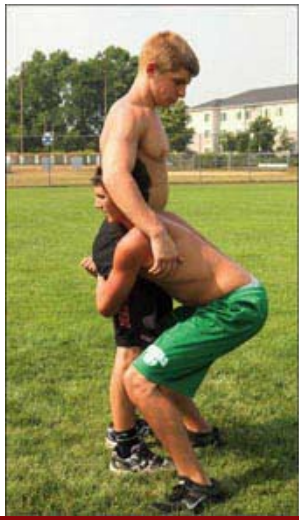


Once you can carry your partner for distances of 50 ft., you are strong enough to squat him. This is similar to the Zercher squat. You can even explode more with your partner, and throw your hands upward at the top of each squat as if you were going to throw him in the air.

BUDDY SQUAT LIFT

You can stagger your feet slightly, or square your stance like a normal squat. Lock your hands against your partner's hamstrings and push your hips back, feet flat and knees up. Perform the squat lift by standing up and fully extending your body. Squat your partner down under control and repeat for prescribed reps.

Common Fault: Sagging your body, rounding your back and shooting your hips up. Always keep a flat back just as you would in a normal squat.

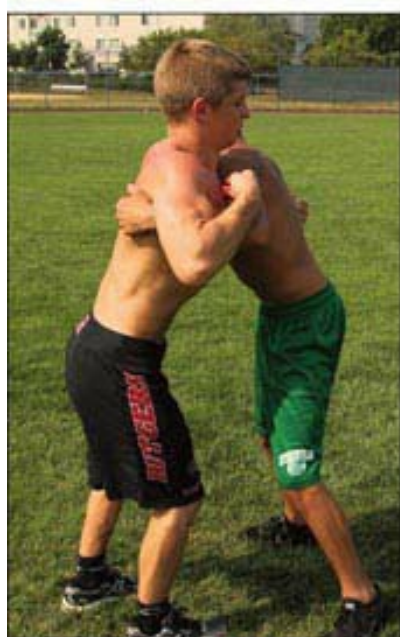
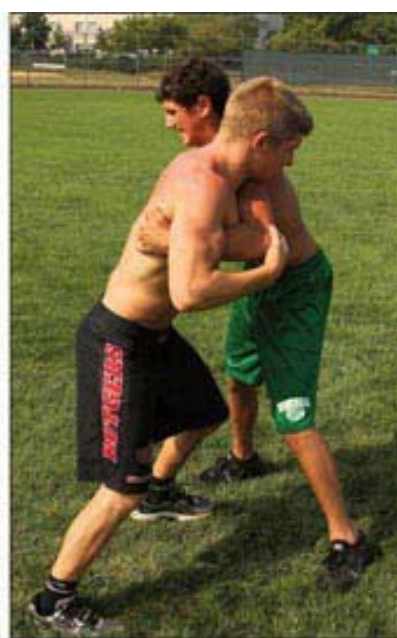
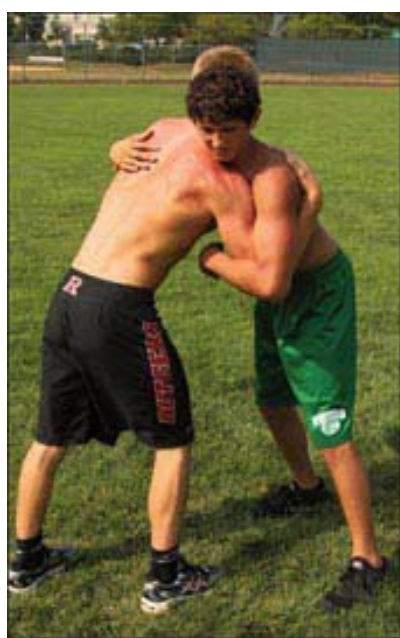


WRONG. Always keep a flat back just as you would in a normal squat.

PUMMELING DRILLS

Although pummeling is a Wrestling and MMA drill, I have used pummeling for our football players to teach them hand fighting. Each partner is chest to chest in an over-under position. At the same time, both partners feed overhook position into an underhand position while switching their head positions.

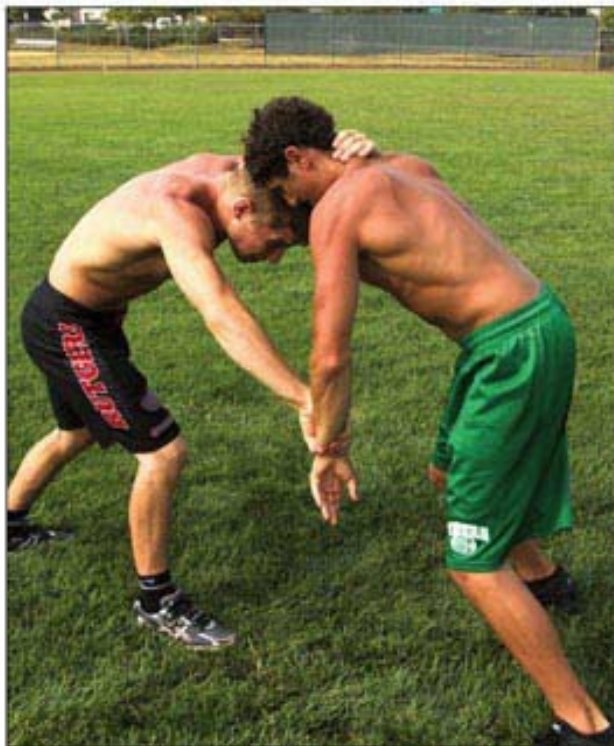
Once your technique is dialed in, you can move your legs and add leg drive to increase the intensity.



BRAWLING DRILLS

*I was inspired to try brawling drills after watching Dan Gable's video, **Competitor Supreme**, back in 1992. Coach Gable's wrestlers would sprint up the stadium stairs. At the top of the stairs, behind the bleachers, they would begin pummeling, pushing, and shoving while their heart rates were going through the roof. This taught them how to fight for hand positioning, keep a strong athletic stance, and remain mentally tough and aggressive while under physical and mental stress.*

I've used these drills after sled work, in between sets, after hill sprints, on football fields, etc.



Explosive Lower Body Bodyweight Drills

SQUAT JUMP

Explode out of the squat and fully extend your legs while leaving the ground. Abs remain braced, and landing should be smooth, fast, and with proper squat technique. Drop into a half squat and repeat for prescribed reps.

Common fault is same as regular squats and hands pushing off of legs. Hands are not to touch your legs.

LUNGE JUMP



Begin in the bottom of a lunge and explode upwardly as high as possible. Arm swing on the up phase is optional. Aim for maximum height while switching the lead leg. Land softly and repeat for prescribed reps.

Common Fault: Collapsing the back foot, dropping the torso downward, and crashing the back knee into the ground.

BROAD JUMP



Perform 1 rep and catch the landing at first. Begin with arms overhead and body fully extended, then squat down half way and swing arms behind the body. Immediately swing arms forward while jumping for max distance. Catch the landing in a squat and repeat. Once you gain proficiency, perform 2 - 5 broad jumps in a row.

BROAD JUMP FULL EXTENSION

Extend your entire body fully on every broad jump.

Explosive Pushup Drills

Before you can perform plyometric pushups, you must develop a solid base of strength and stability through your upper body and torso. Additionally, plyometrics — also called jump training or shock training — is very challenging to the body.

Jump training is NOT just for lower body, but also for the upper body.

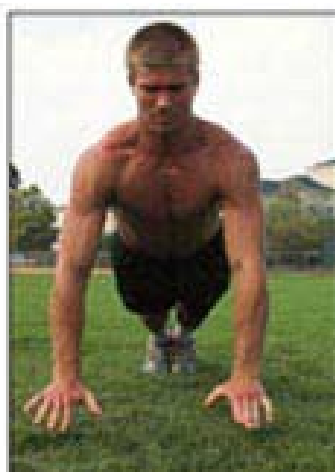
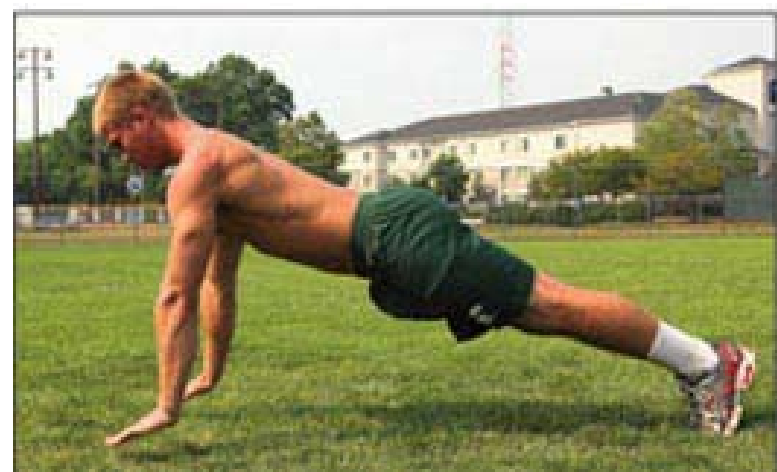
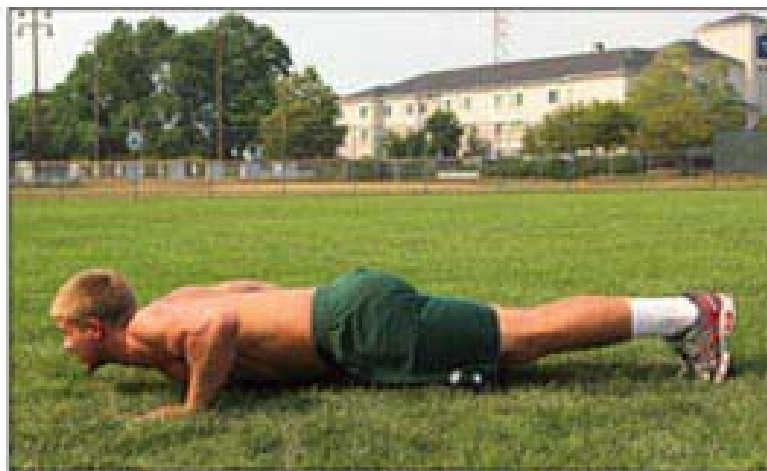
Keep the reps low and stop before the reps slow down. This is the safest, most effective way to implement jump training. I have seen coaches abuse plyometrics and use this as a selling point by throwing around buzzwords. They end up pushing kids into high rep, sloppy technique jump training which ends up hurting the athletes via injury or through poor performance.

In a nutshell, be smart and be safe.

PLYO RELEASE PUSH UP

Explode out of the pushup so your hands leave the ground. Land softly and repeat for prescribed reps.

Common Faults: Not exploding enough and simply pulling the arms away from the ground. Landing hard and slamming the hands and wrists to the ground.



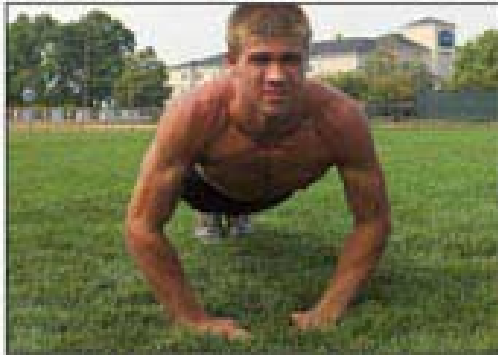
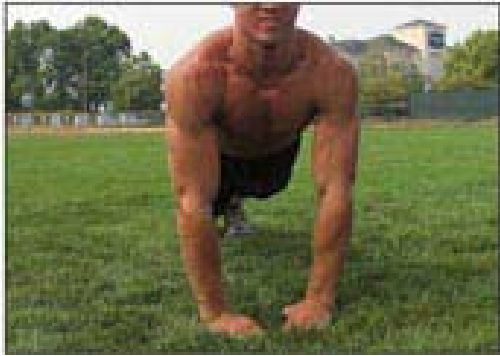
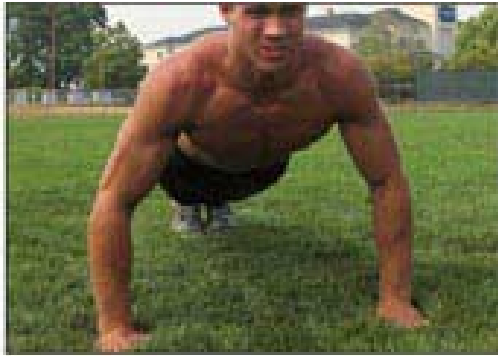
STAGGER PLYO PUSH UP

Stagger your hands, with one in front of your shoulder and one behind the shoulder. Explode out of the pushup and switch hand positions while in the air. As always, land softly and explode back up for prescribed reps, always stopping before you slow down.



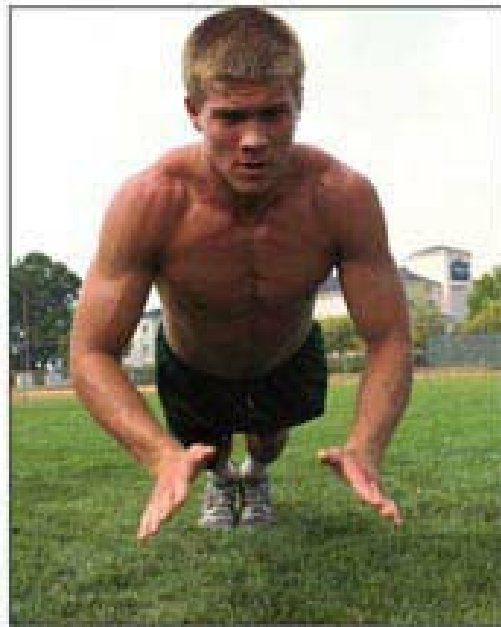
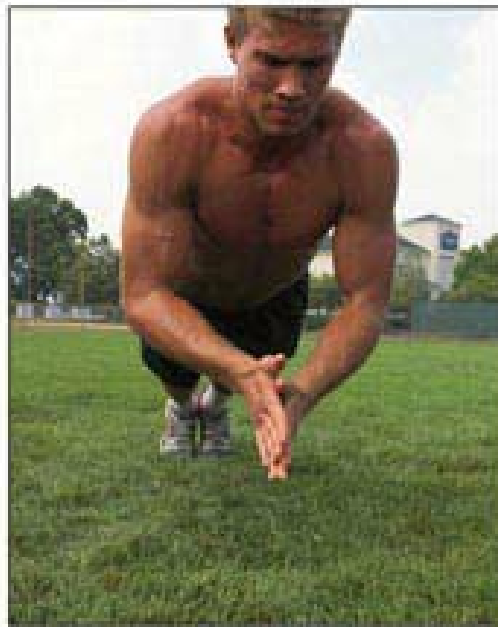
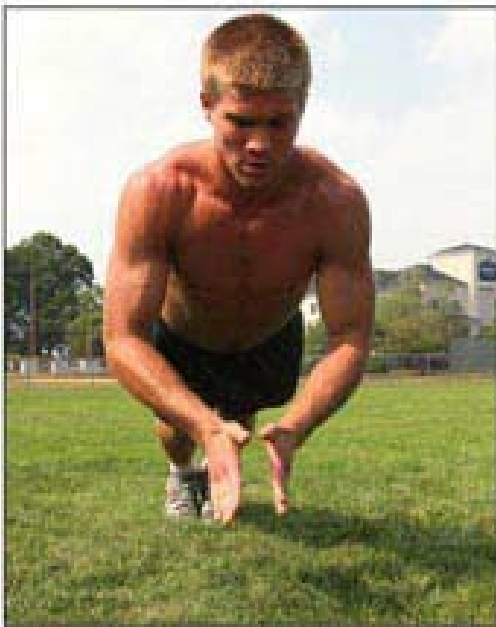
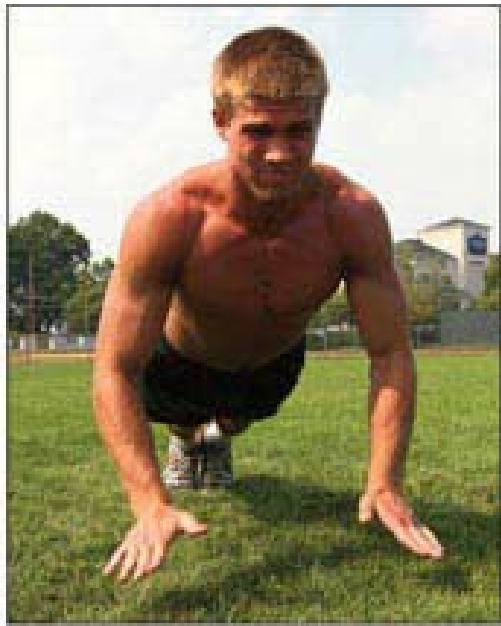
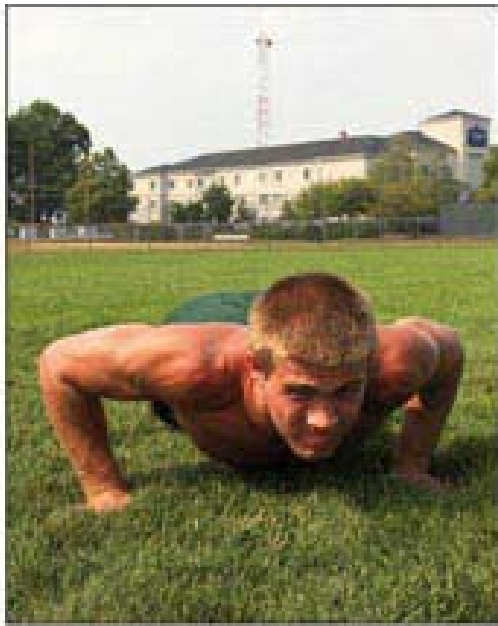
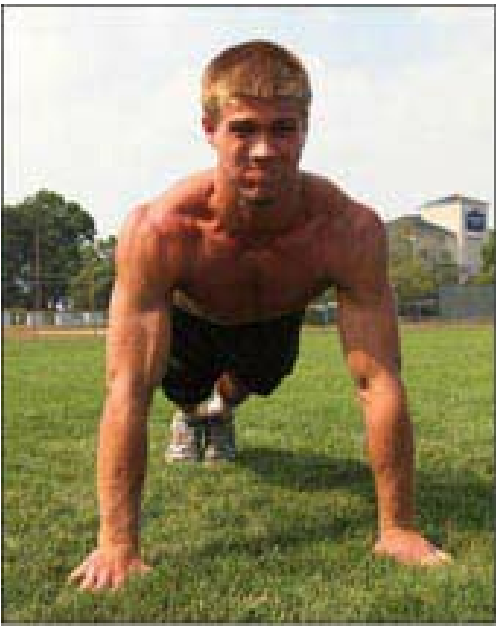
CLOSE/WIDE PLYO PUSH UP

Perform your plyometric push ups while switching each rep from a close grip hand position to a slightly wider than shoulder-width hand position.



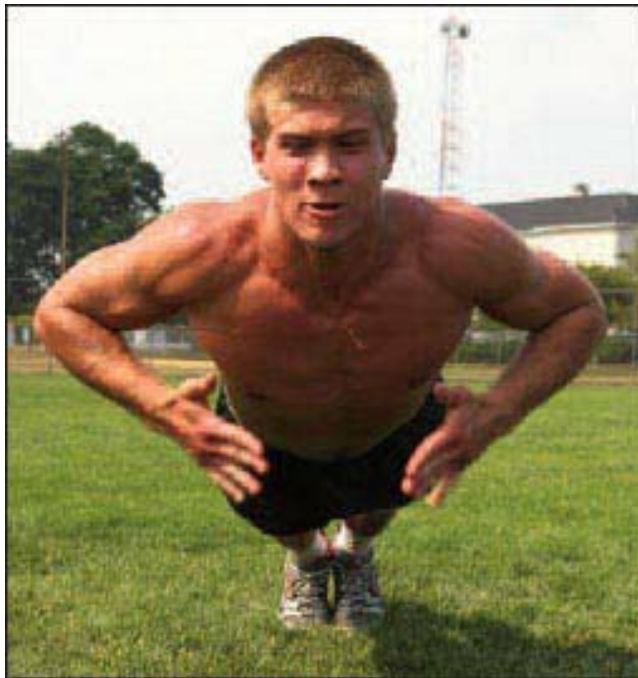
CLAPPING PUSH UP

Explode out of the pushup and clap your hands while in the air.



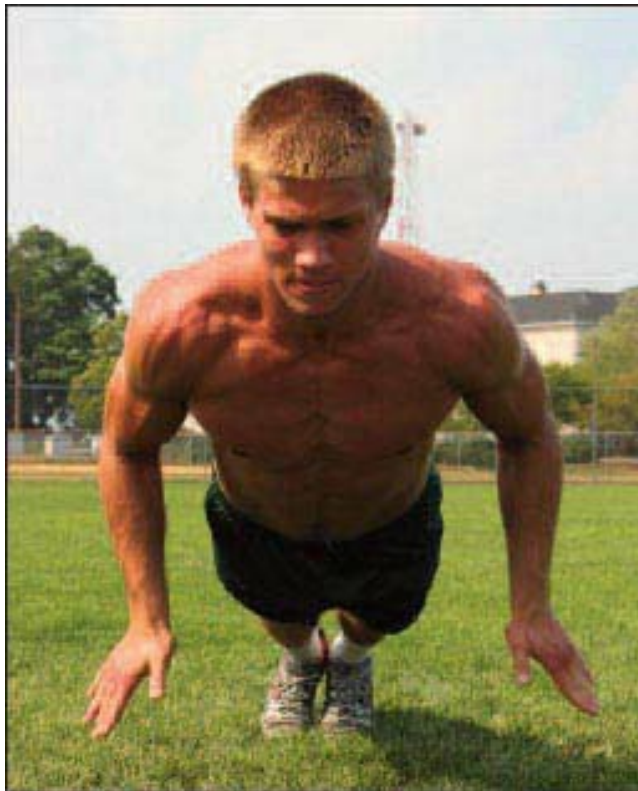
CHEST SLAP PUSH UP

This plyo pushup variation requires greater strength and power than the clapping push up, as you'll need more height. Explode upwards and slap your chest on each rep.



HIP SLAP PUSH UP

This variation requires even greater strength and power, as you'll need to explode upward high enough for your hands to travel back, slap your hips and safely land in the push up position. The next level here is clapping behind your back on each rep.



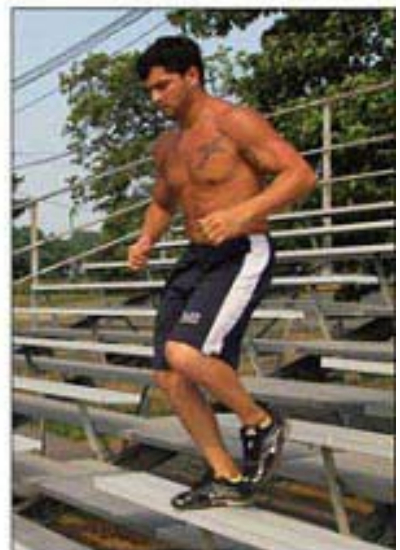
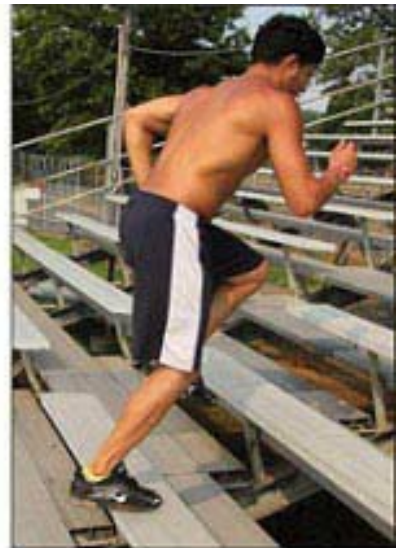
Sprint & Stairs Training

I began running stairs back when I was 13 years old, the summer before high school. My older brother was training for wrestling and took me to the local park, which had these giant cement stairs. He had me sprinting hills and stairs one day, and the next day my legs were crushed. Too bad there was no one telling me that distance running would slow me down and wreak havoc on my knees.

Stair sprints and hill sprints are tops for developing power, conditioning, and explosiveness.

STAIR SPRINTS

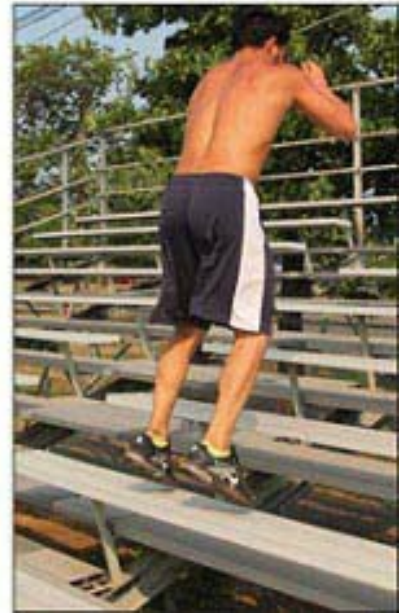
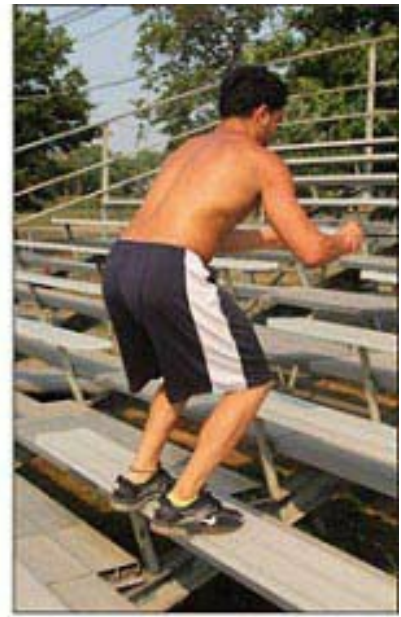
Keep it simple. Sprint up the stairs and then walk or jog down for recovery. You can also mix in calisthenics at the top and /or bottom of the stairs for added intensity.



STAIR JUMPS

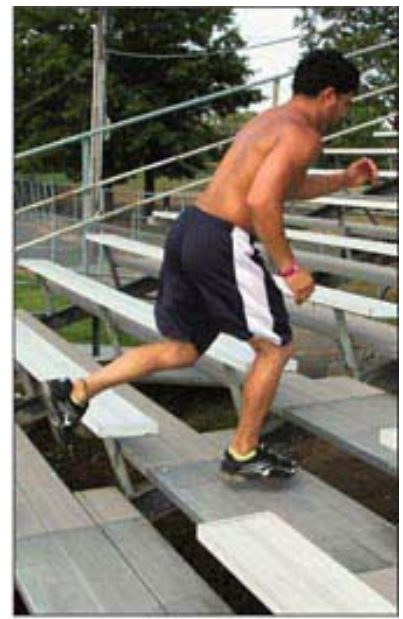
Jumps up the stairs are amazing for developing leg power and power endurance. You can

jump up individual stairs or be more explosive and jump up 2 or 3 stairs at a time. Walk or jog down for recovery.



STAIR HOPS

Perform hops on one foot, landing on the ball of your foot. Hop up the stairs on one foot, jog back down, and then repeat on the other foot. If you're new to this routine, then only perform hops half way up the stairs, switch to your other foot, and finish the remaining stairs.



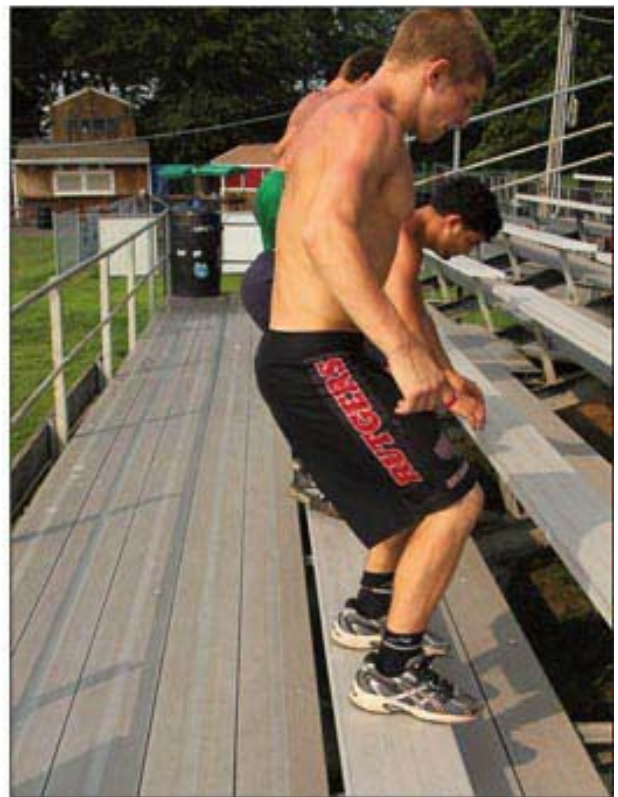
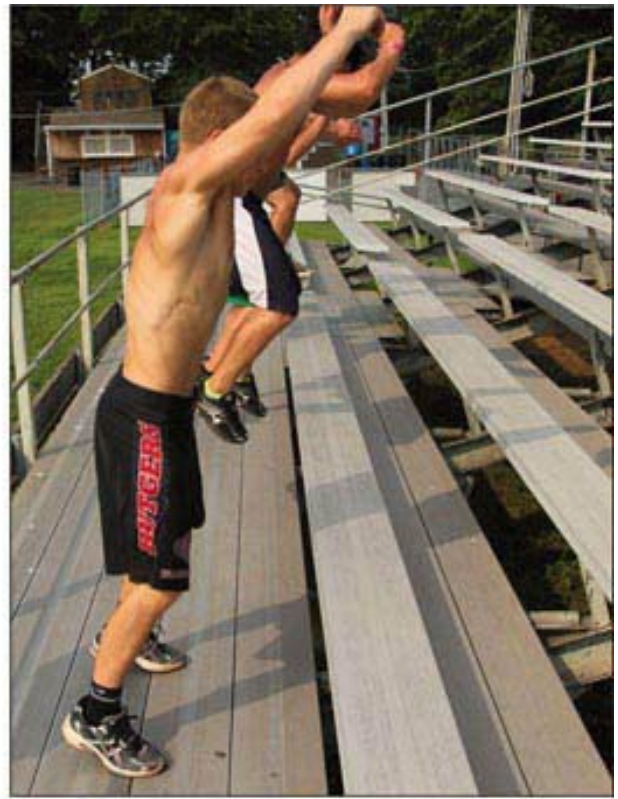
STAIR CRAWLS

Start in the bear crawl position and crawl up the stairs. If you have solid body awareness you can also crawl down the stairs moving in a reverse bear crawl position. Beginners & intermediates can walk down and repeat. I've performed these with a weight vest on steep stadium stairs and it changes the game BIG time compared to the shorter steps on a high school field.



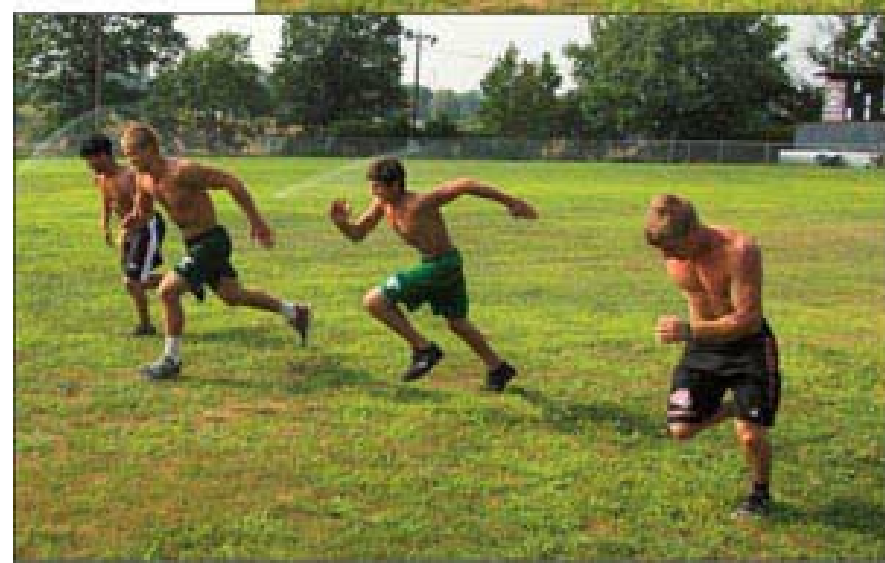
STAIR REBOUND JUMPS

Similar to performing multiple consecutive broad jumps, the stair rebound jumps will require some arm swing and a very fast “touch n’ go” style of jumping. Once your feet land on the stairs, whip your arms upward and rebound jump as far as possible to the next set of stairs. Each jump is a touch & go style.



SPRINT RACE

Training on your own can be great when you are highly motivated, but for those who need the extra kick in the behind, I always recommend training in groups and competing against one another. Depending upon your goals, you can vary the distance of the sprint races. You can perform short sprints such as 10 yards to focus on explosive power out of the hole, or you can race as far as 100 yards or longer. Each distance offers a unique benefit and challenge.



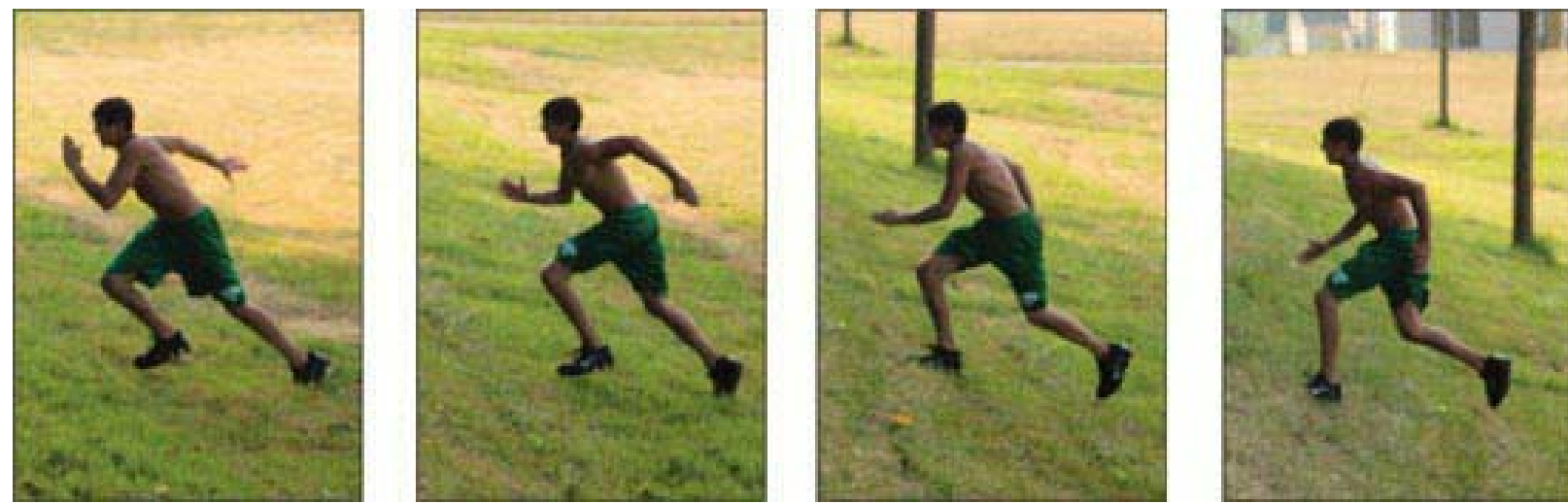
HILL SPRINTS

Hill sprints are one of my personal favorite speed and conditioning methods. They force the athlete to use aggressive arm swings – something newer athletes often fail to do on flat surfaces. . They are also less likely to strain your hamstrings compared to running on flat surfaces.

I like to use varied starts for all our sprints, where the athlete will sprint upon a verbal, hand signal or whistle. Try these start positions:

- *Starting in the bottom or top of a push up position*
- *Mountain climbers*
- *Starting on your back*
- *Three broad jumps then sprint*

I can not emphasize enough the importance of a thorough warm up before any sprinting activity.



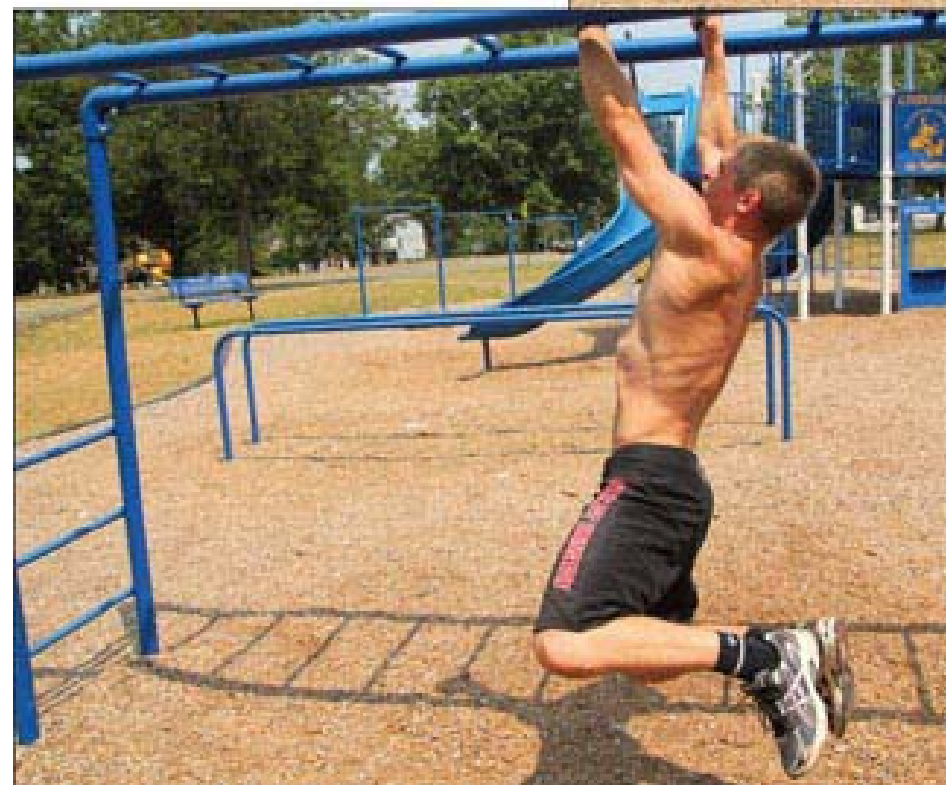
Upper Body

Bodyweight Playground Pulling Movements

The local playgrounds became my stomping grounds as soon as I stopped training at commercial gyms. My friend and I would take a sandbag, a few kettlebells, and sometimes a sled, and drive around searching for playgrounds at which to train.

Nothing I found ever compared to the monster playgrounds I would see in places like Russia, where adults and athletes trained. These playgrounds weren't just places for kids.

MONKEY BARS



MONKEY BAR CLIFF HANGERS

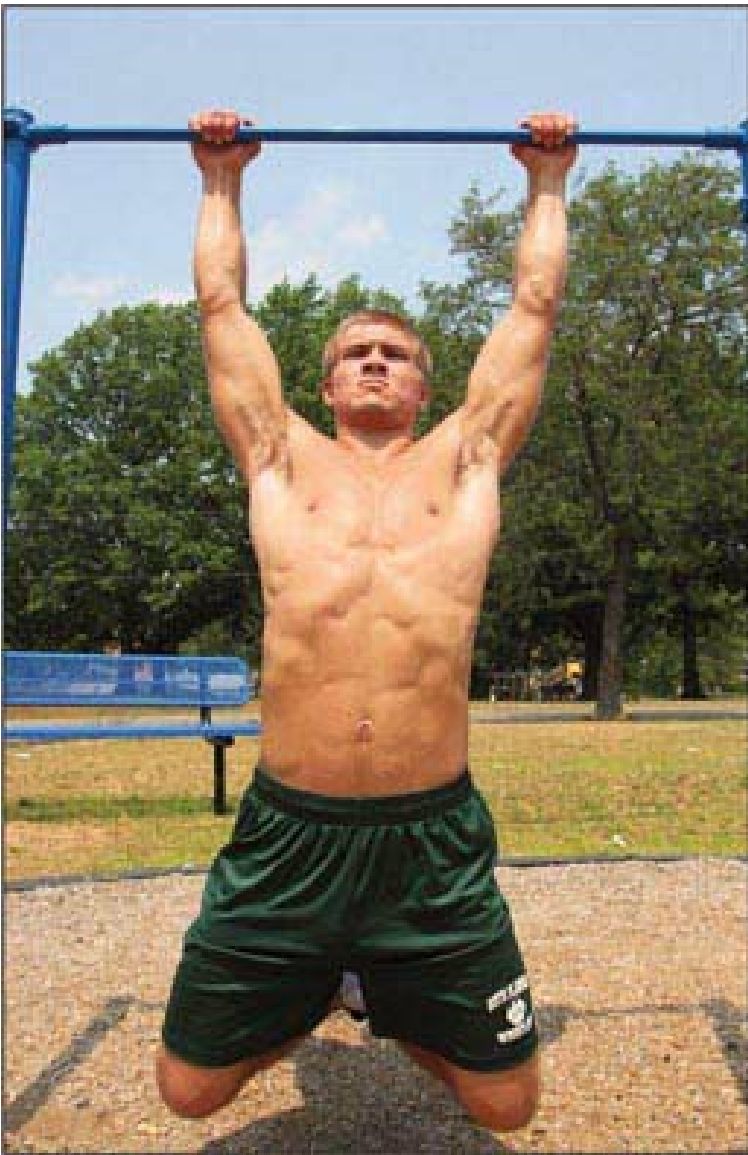
Hand-walking on monkey bars is a great way to develop hand strength, upper body strength, and endurance. The monkey bars develop various types of strength depending on how you move. You can keep the arms slightly bent and develop isometric strength, while straight arms will develop mobility and flexibility. You'll improve overall endurance as you climb back and forth on the monkey bars.

Use as many variations as possible, traveling forward, backward, and side to side.



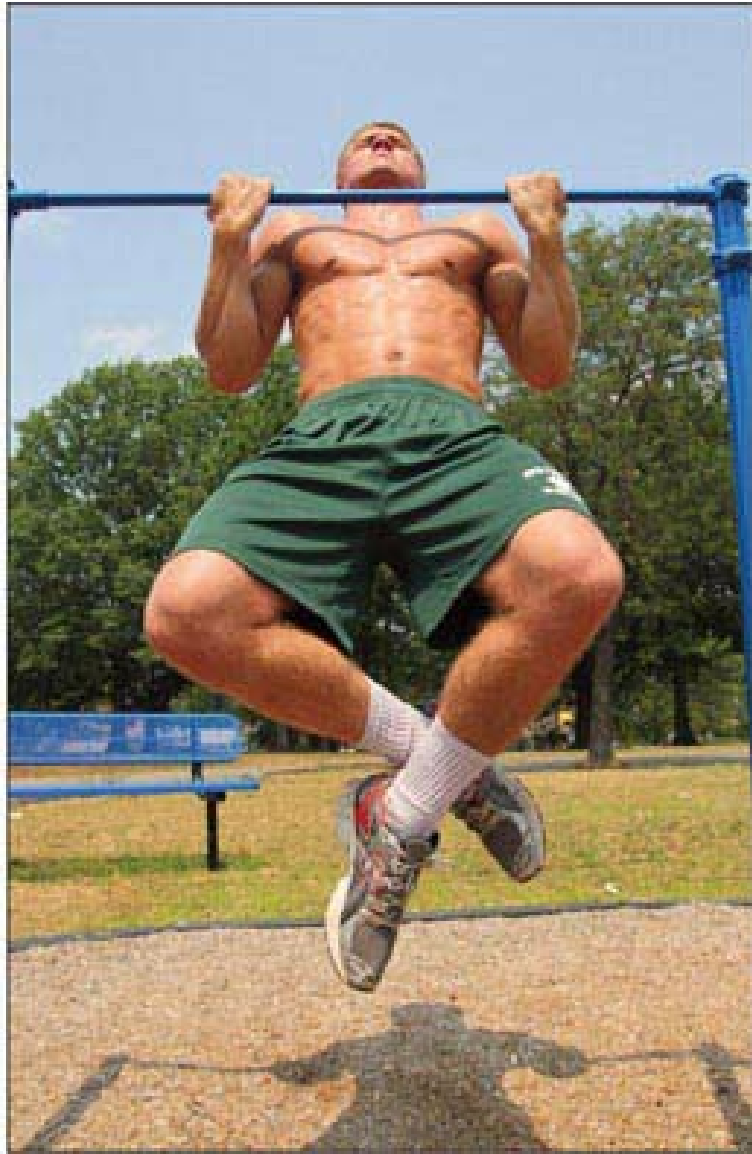
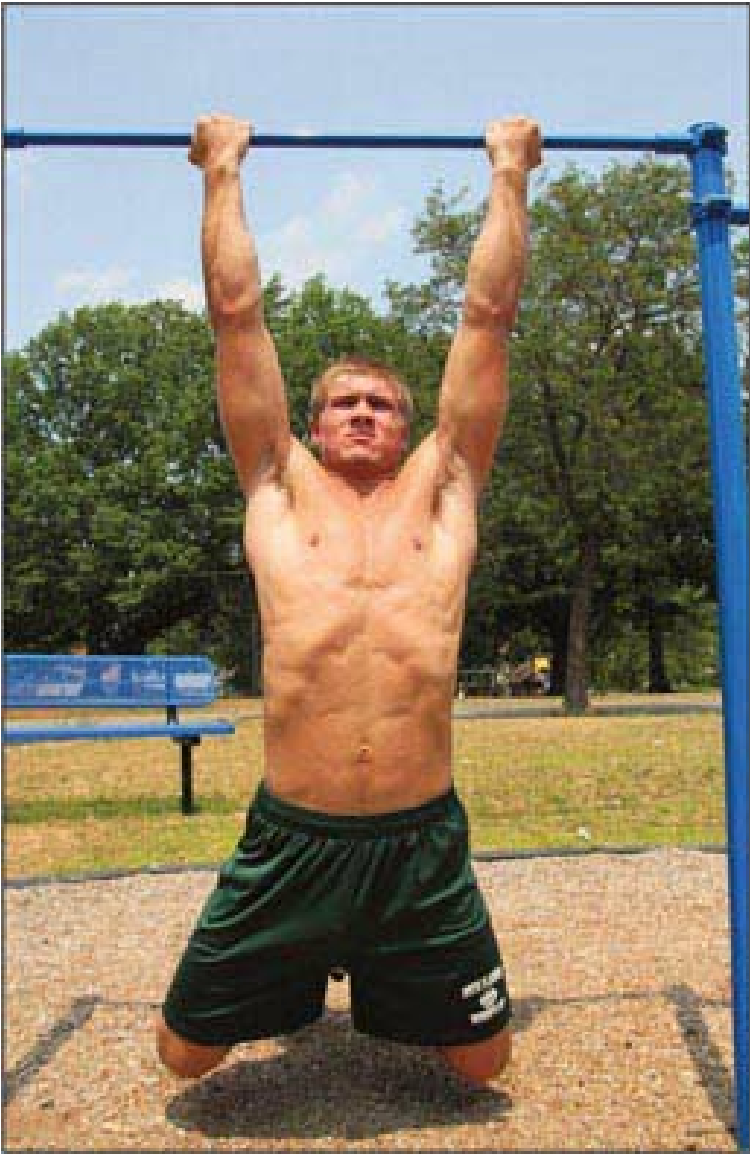
PULL UP

Pull Ups are Palms Away.



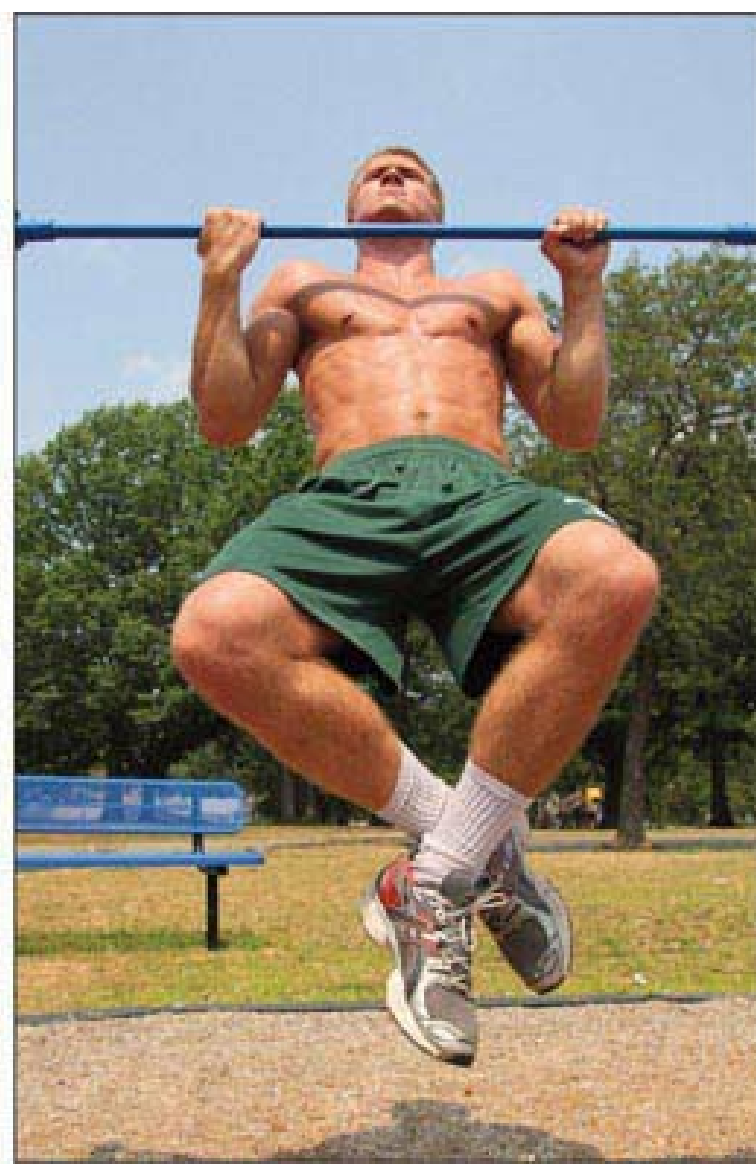
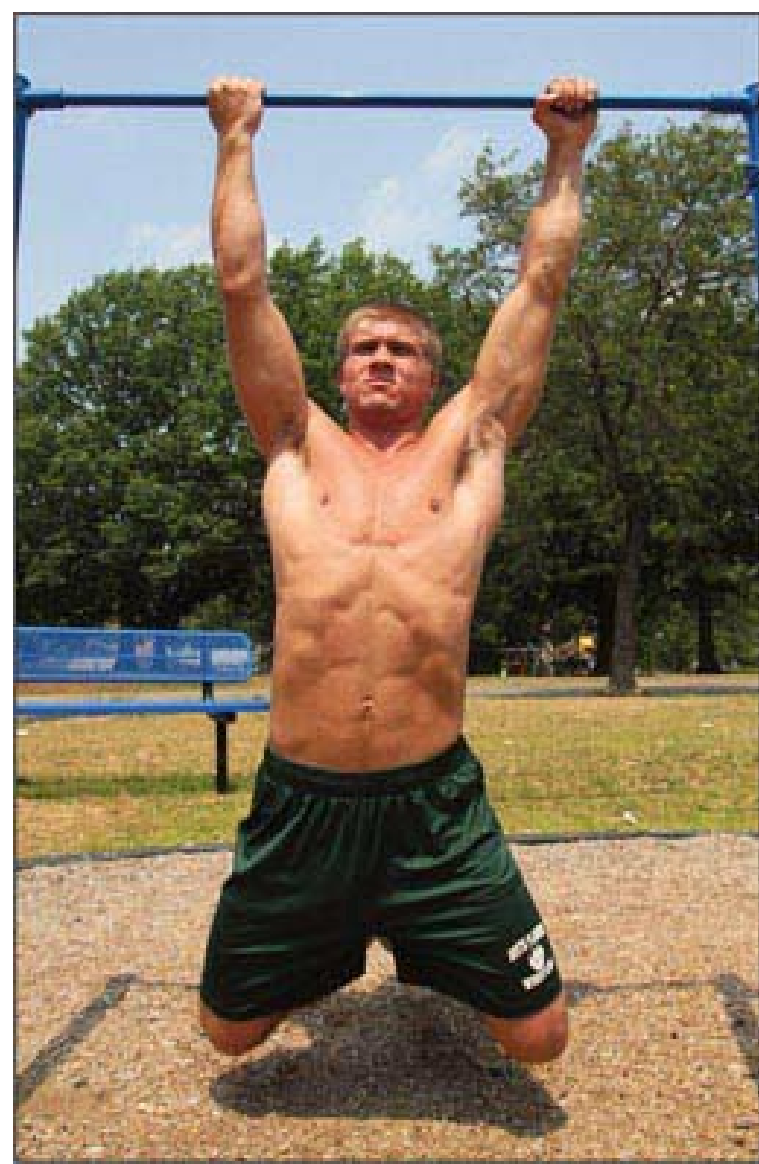
CHIN UP

Chin Ups are Palms Facing YOU.



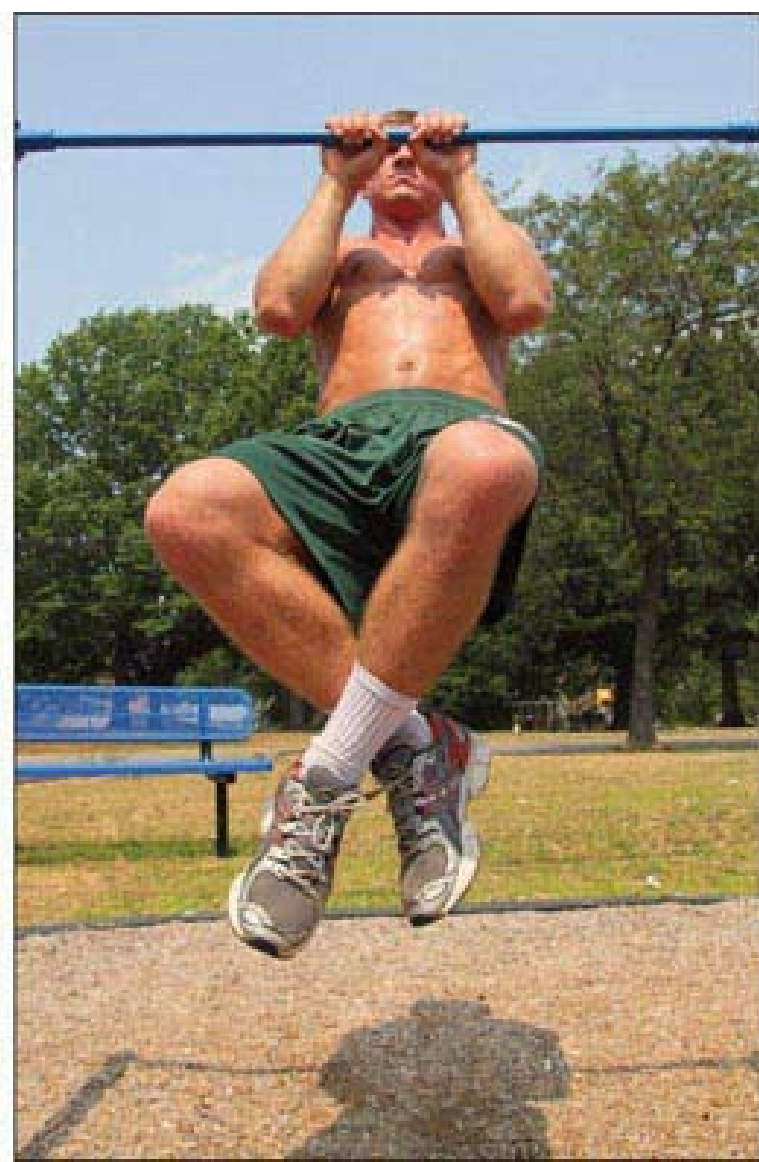
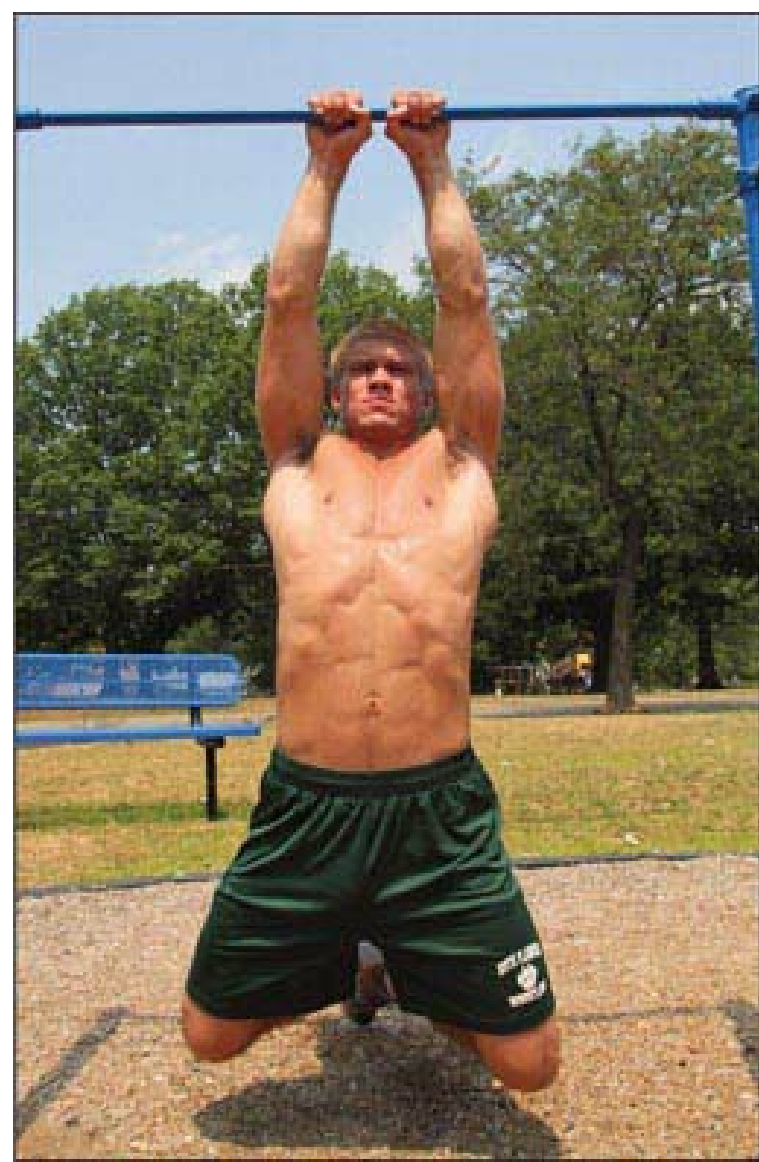
MIXED CHINS

Alternating palms Facing and away.

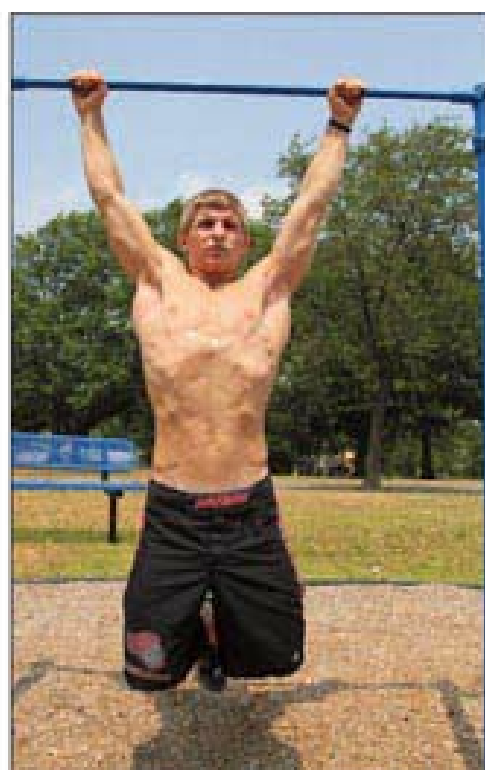
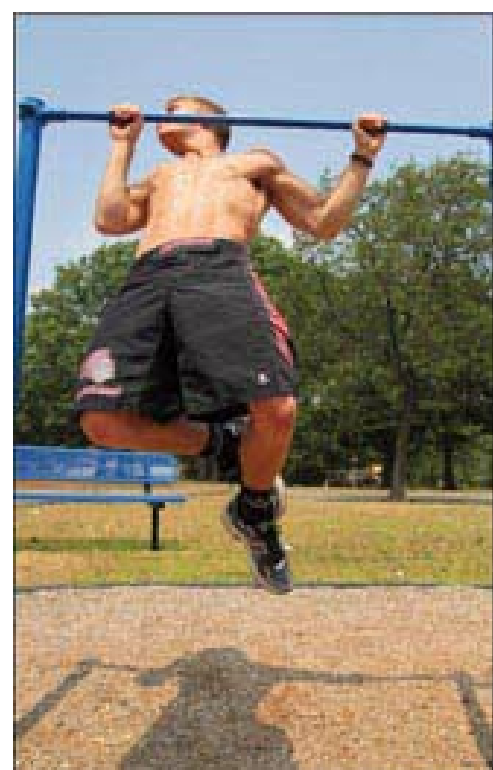


CLOSE CHINS

Close grip Chin Ups.



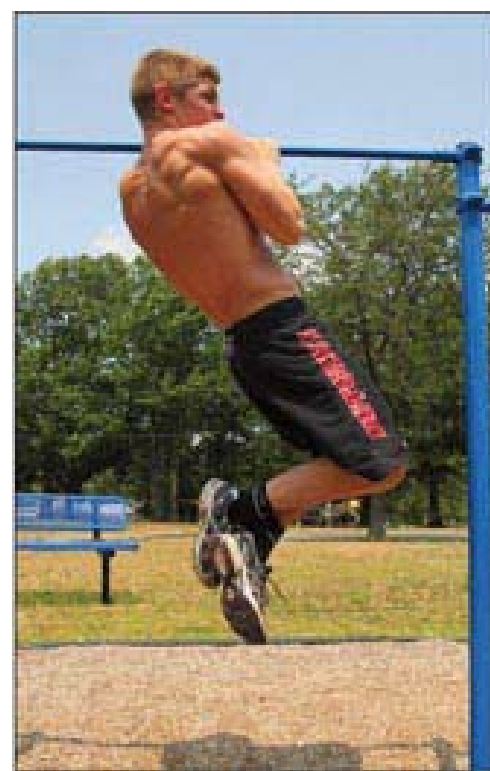
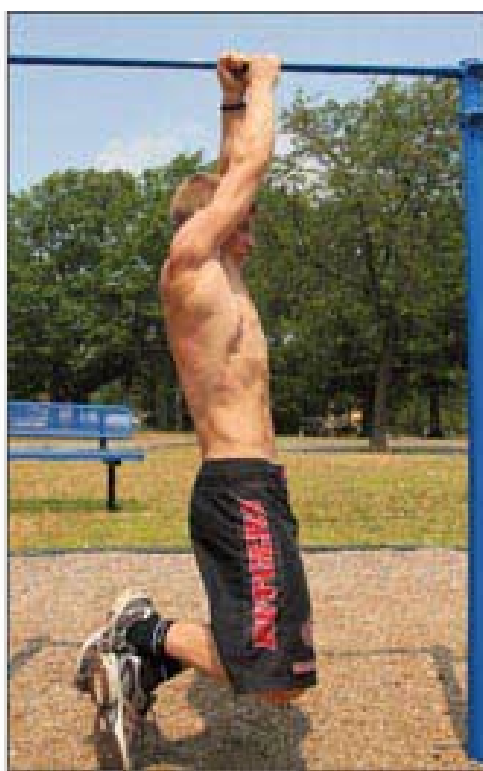
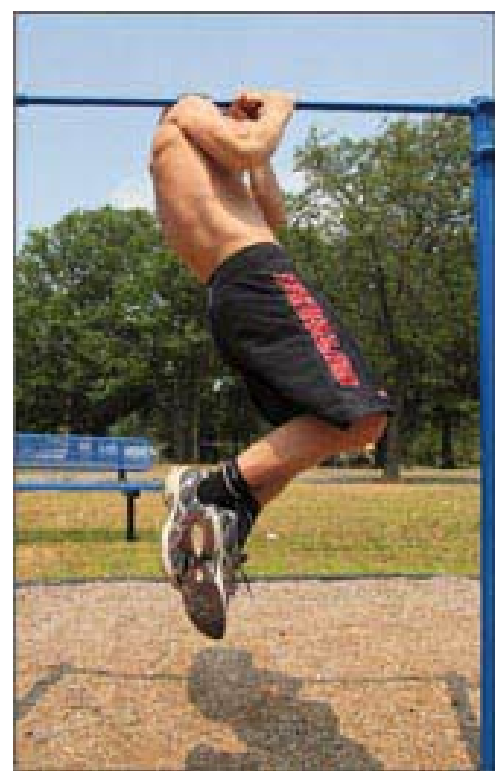
SIDE CHINS



COMMANDO PULL UPS

On ALL our pullup variations, the goal is to move through a full range of motion. Do not perform half reps. I prefer to extend the arms all the way down, while keeping the shoulders and lats engaged. At the top, try to clear your chin over the bar. I am not a fan of kipping and swinging through pullups, as your upper body is not truly doing all the work.

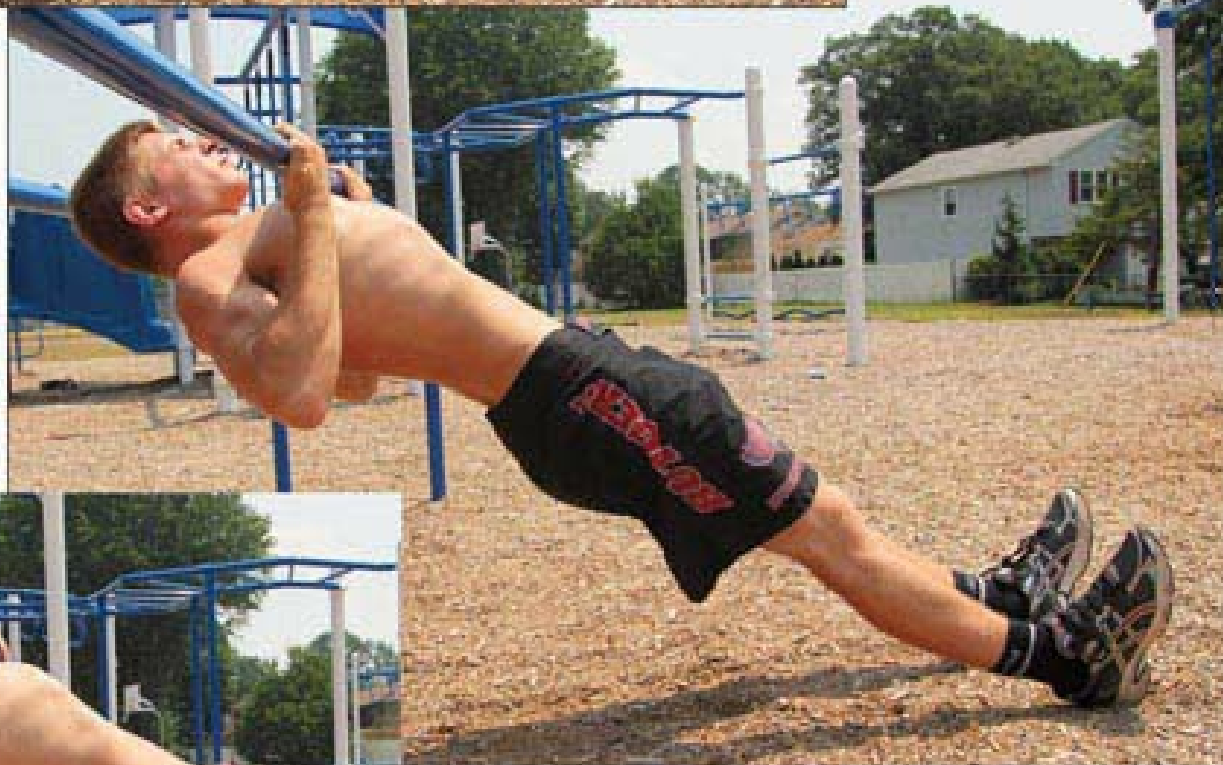
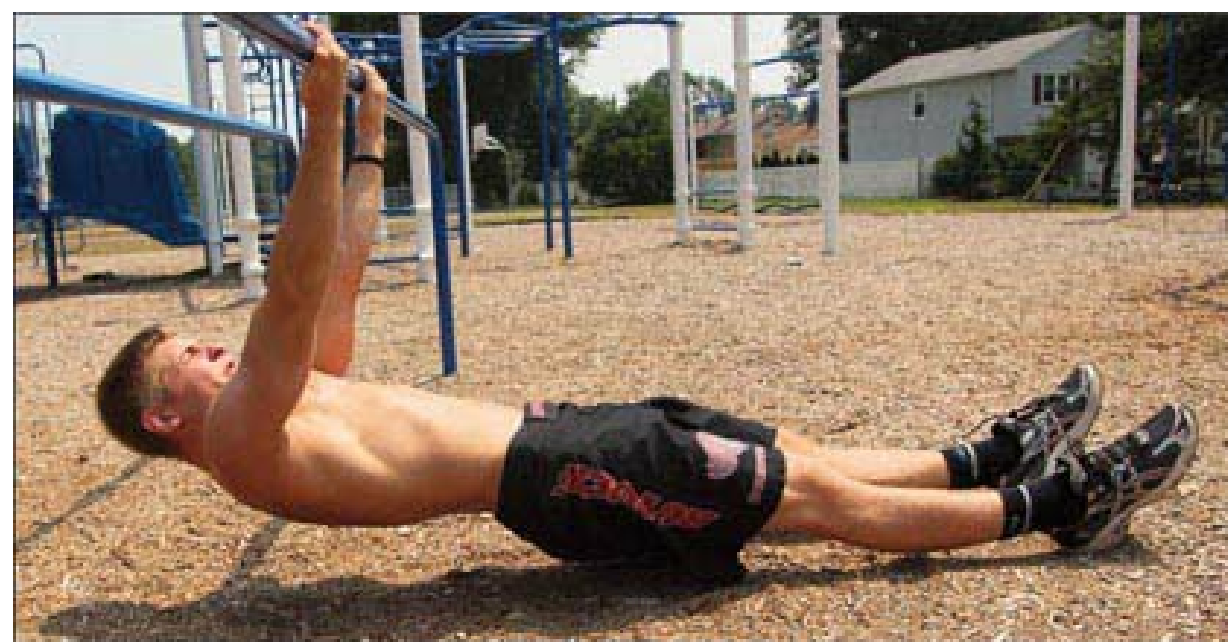
Varying your grip and changing the angle of pulling helps you avoid overuse and abuse of the pulling muscles and joints.



RECLINE ROW

This exercise looks like an inverted pushup, and the same principles apply. Keep your entire body rigid, abs tight, feet together, and squeeze all your muscles from hands to toes. Make sure your shoulders are active by retracting them and keeping them tight. When rowing, squeeze your shoulder blades, and the only thing to move should be your arms. Do not let your body sway. Pretend you have a grapefruit under your chin, which will stop you from pulling your chin to chest which leads to rounding your back.

The neck, back and, legs should make one straight line.



Try overhand and underhand grips.

TOWEL PULL UP

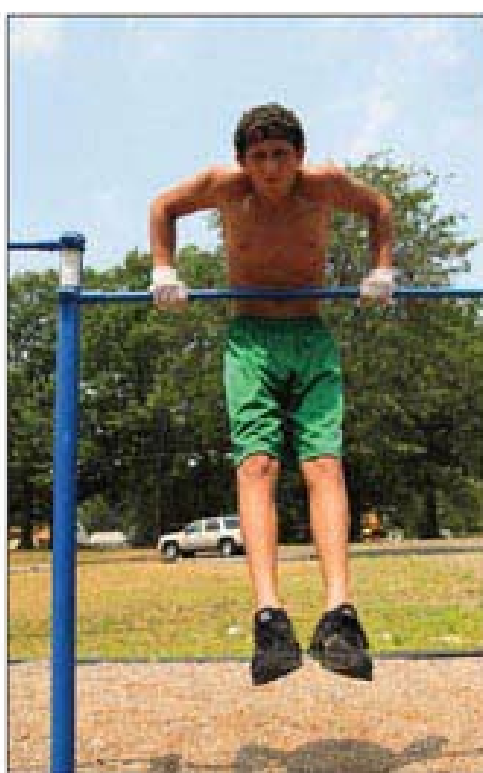
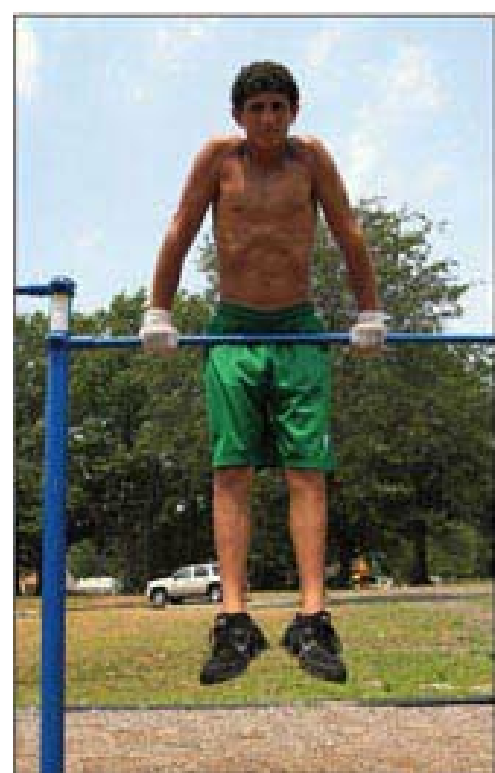
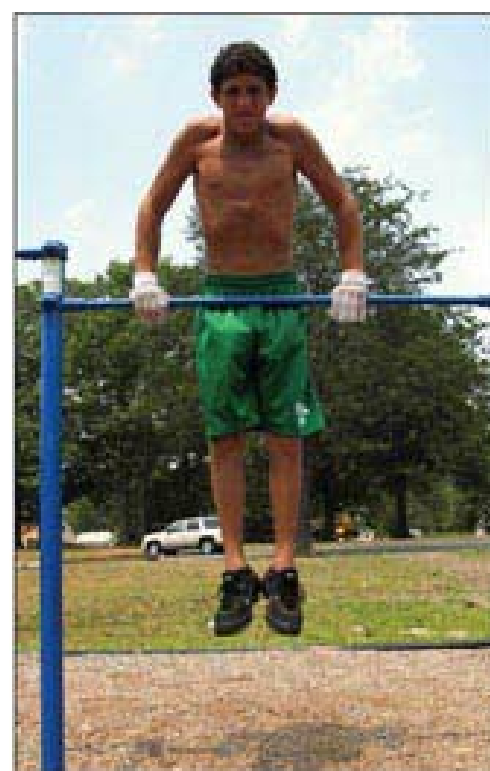
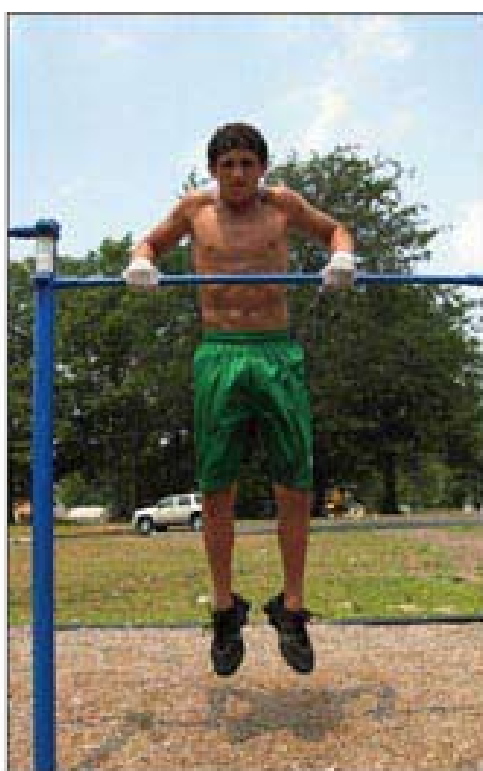
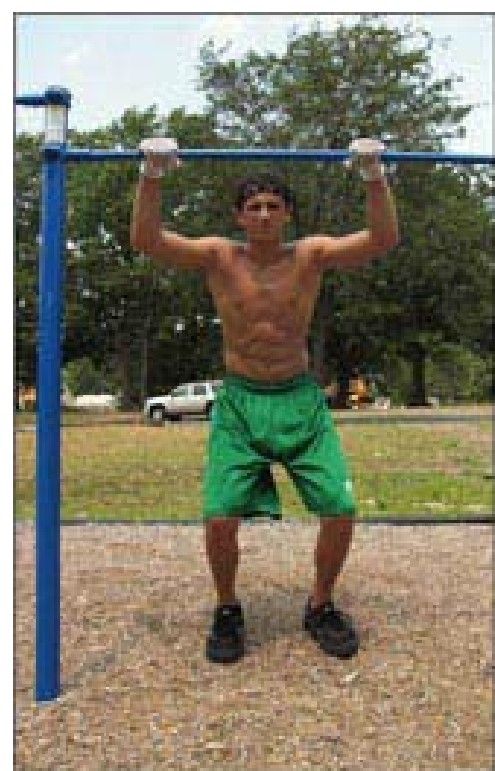
When pullups from the bars no longer challenge you, get a thick towel and perform your pullups. Your hands and grip will be tested big time. The same rules apply here as for all other pull ups: Use your full range of motion, and avoid leg swinging or kipping.



JUMP MUSCLE UP

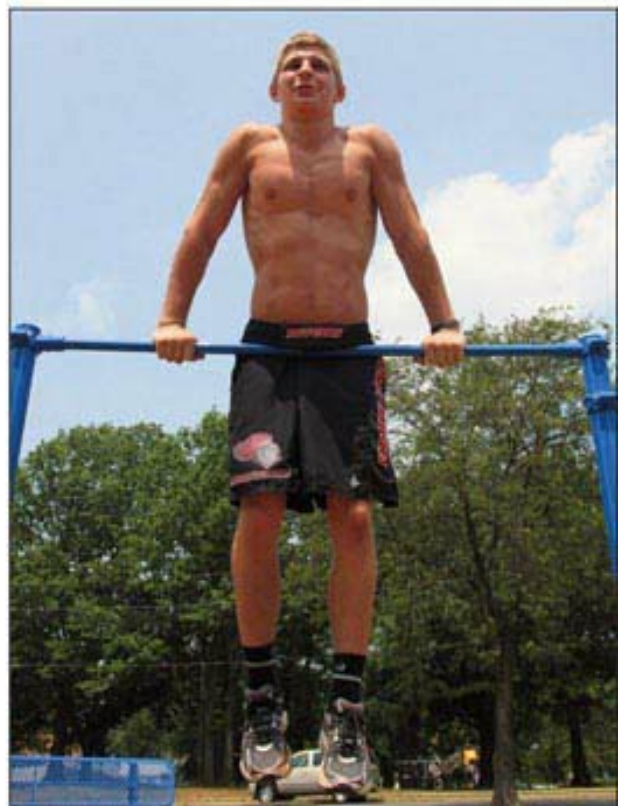
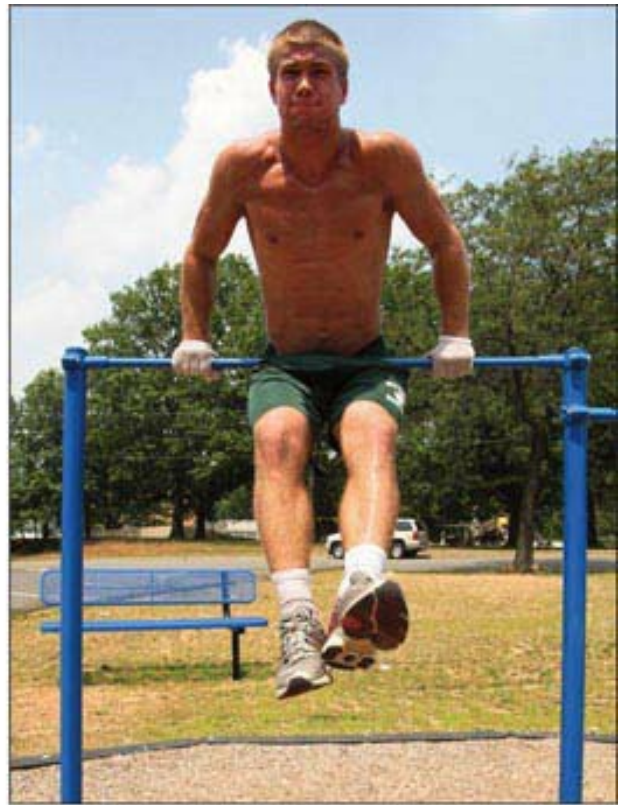
When learning the muscle up on the bar, you can dial in your position by finding a lower bar and adding some assistance from your legs. You can do this if you also want to perform vertical pushups in the top portion of the bar muscle-up.

I prefer not to do these for reps because the technique can quickly begin to slip. My preference is to use the jumping muscle-up to get into the top position and perform the pushups in the top half of the movement.



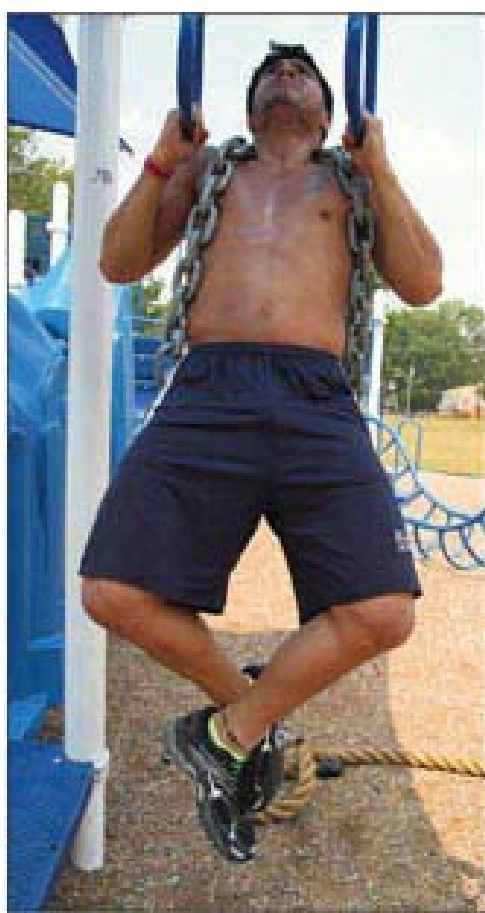
BAR MUSCLE UP

In the bar muscle-up, you must pull explosively and clear your mid-stomach area over the bar. As you clear the bar, transition your upper body forward and over the bar with a slight forward lean. At the top, push up into the lock out position quickly.

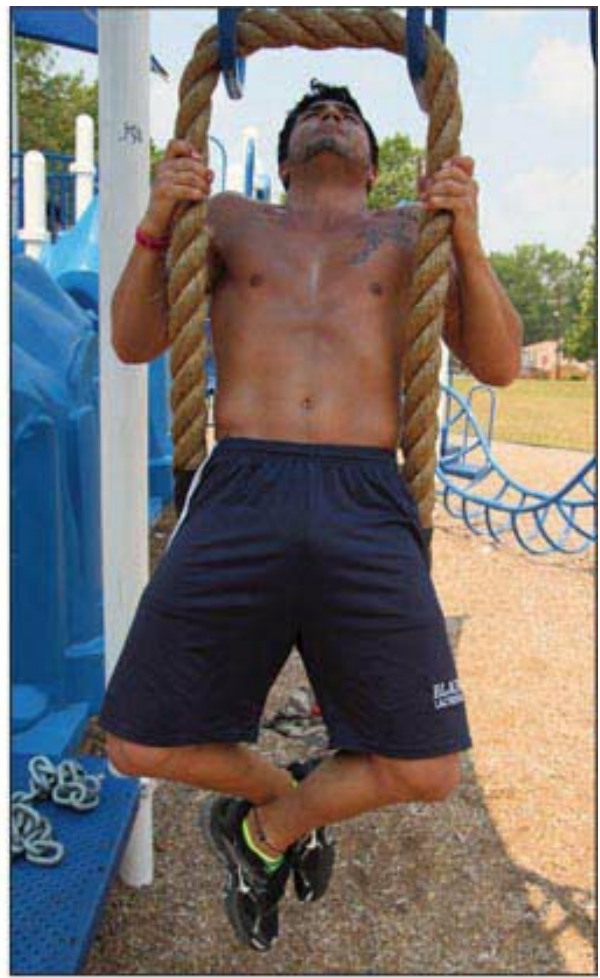


CHAIN PULL UP

We use chains a lot for our bodyweight exercises, as they are easy to put on and take off. These chains are 20 lbs. Once you can perform 10 or more reps of pullups, try adding a chain for added resistance.



ROPE PULL UP

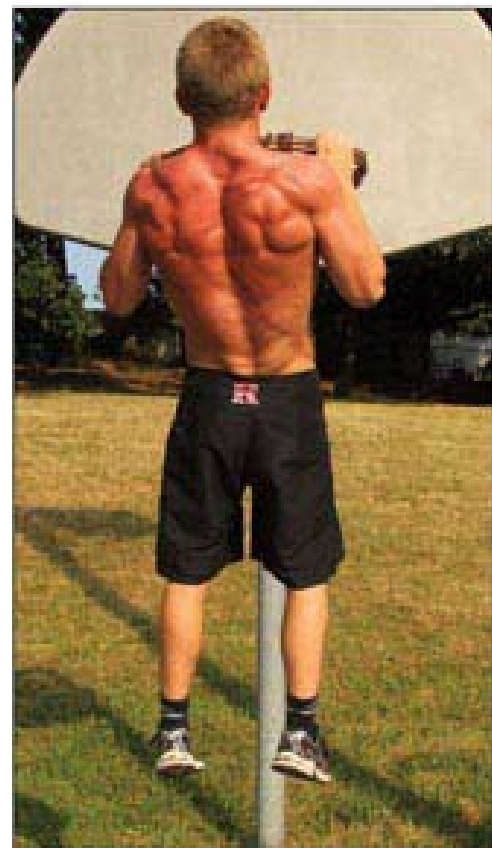
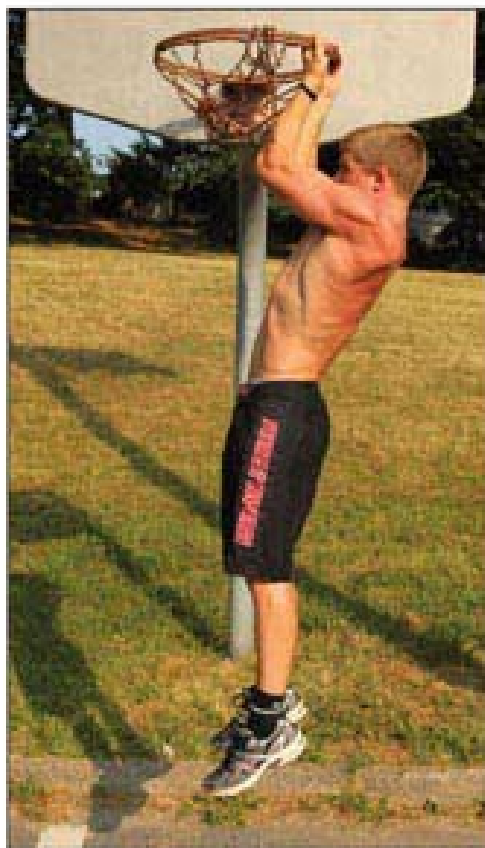
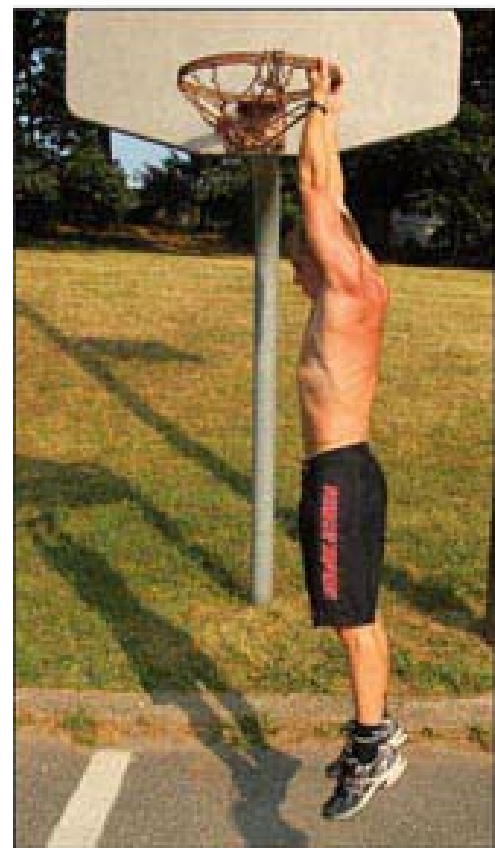
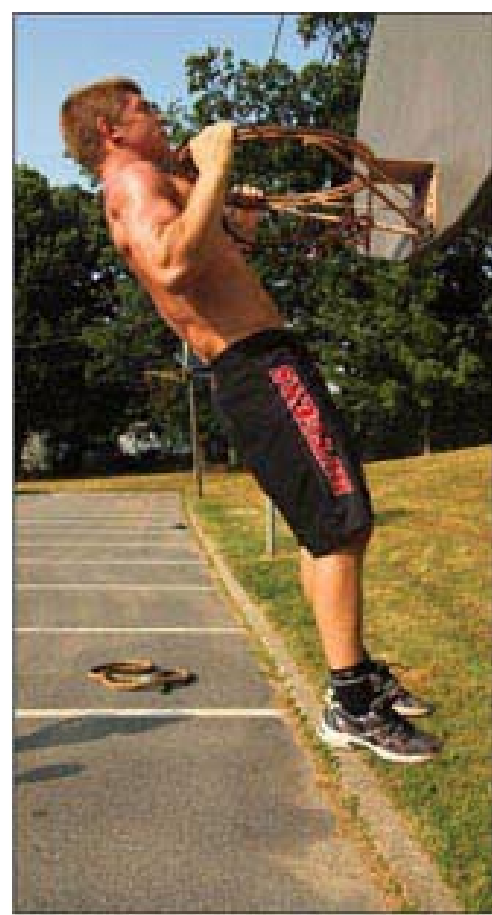
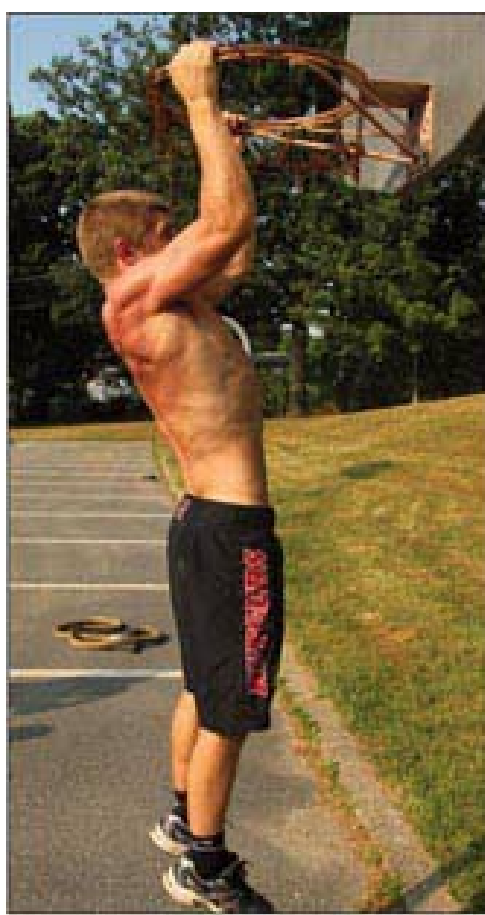
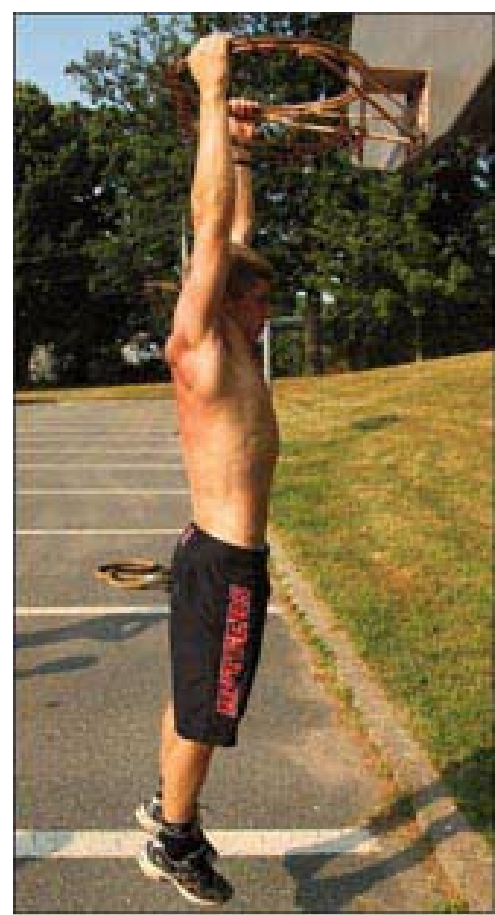


Another way to challenge your grip and increase the intensity of your pullups is by using a thick rope. Your hands must crush the rope and work aggressively to keep you from slipping.

BASKETBALL RIM PULL UPS

If you're lucky enough to find a playground with lower basketball rims, you can perform various pullups from the rims. This stresses your hands differently than towels, ropes, etc.

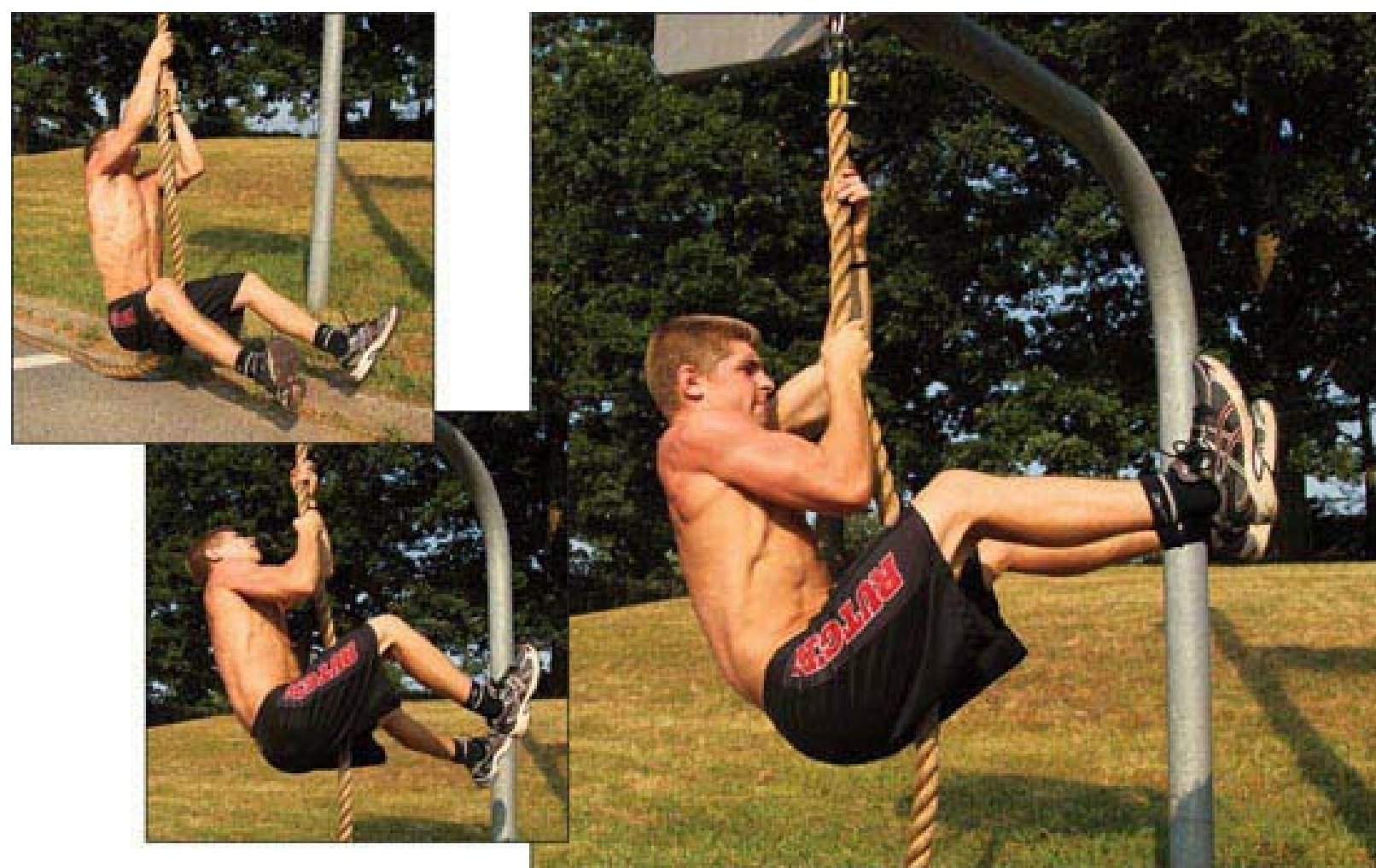
At this playground, we have performed pullups followed by hill sprints, a brutal combination when implementing conditioning methods.



ROPE CLIMB

Rope climbing is one of the best and toughest upper body pulling exercises one can do. For a starter workout, use the recline rope climb to get your hands used to moving in a

hand-over-hand position on the way up, hand-under-hand position on the way down.



RECLINE ROPE CLIMB

When performing recline rows, keep your body rigid on the up and down phase. Your elbows should remain bent during the climb. The common mistake is to use straight arms on the recline climb. This only develops the grip and doesn't stress your pulling muscles much at all.

I explain to my athletes that they should hold the arms in an arm wrestling position. Otherwise you are constantly trying to perform a one-arm pull up on the rope.

Once the recline rope climb feels easy, begin climbing rope from a standing position for a few quick reps —usually 4 or 5 hand-over-hand reps is plenty. Then focus on coming down under control, hand under hand. For safety reasons and to avoid rope burn, never allow the hands to slide down the rope.

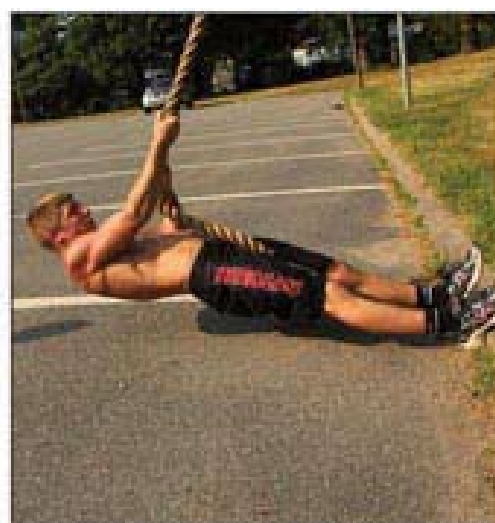
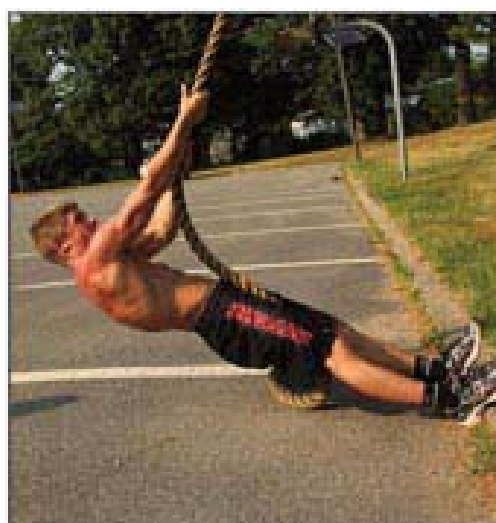
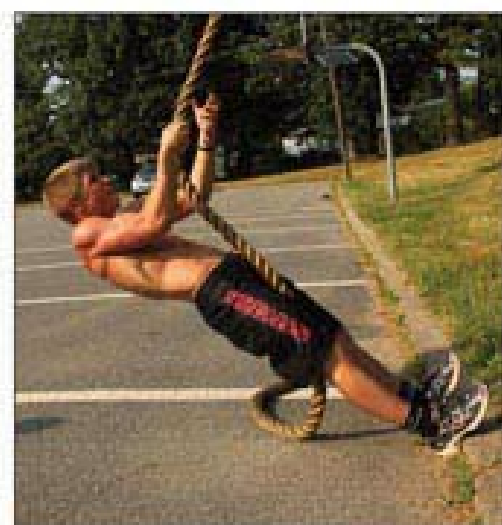
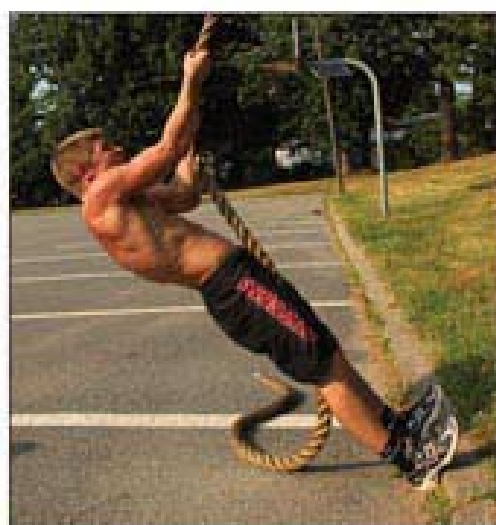
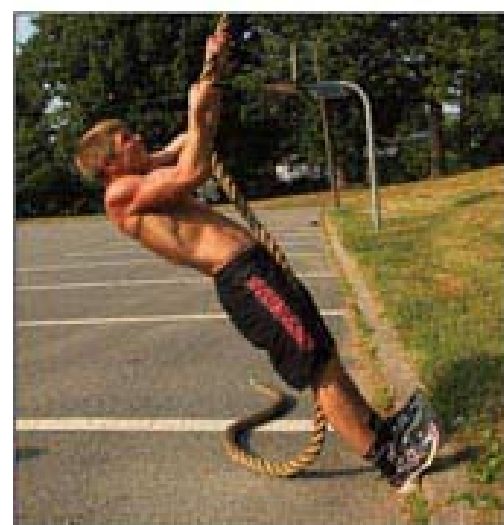
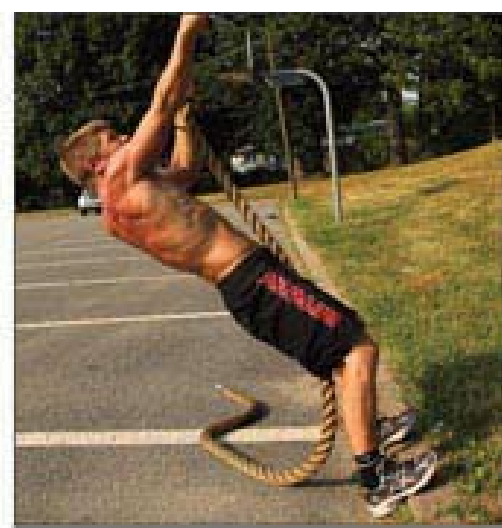
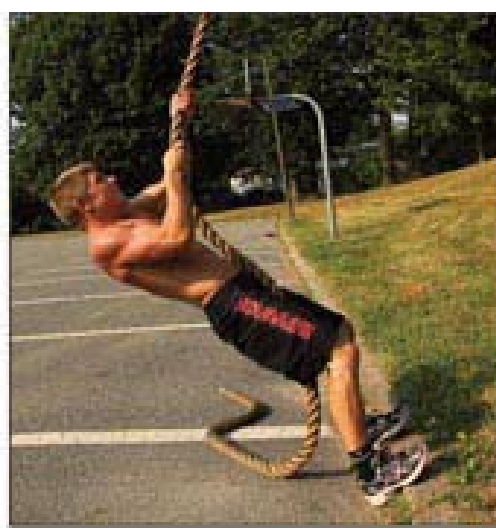
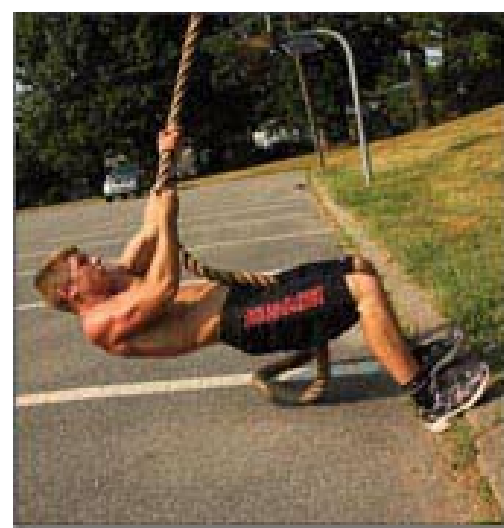
You can utilize foot/leg assistance as well. Military and law enforcement personnel in particular should be learning to climb rope from various positions and angles, including climbing with added gear on your body.

The advanced version of rope climbs and the version I want to see athletes progress to is

from the seated position without assistance from the legs/feet. Begin and finish in the seated position.

I recommend that law enforcement and military personnel experiment with variations utilizing gear, no gear, feet, and no feet. For athletes, sometimes I allow them to add weight to the rope climb, but if done too often the bicep tendons can easily get overworked.

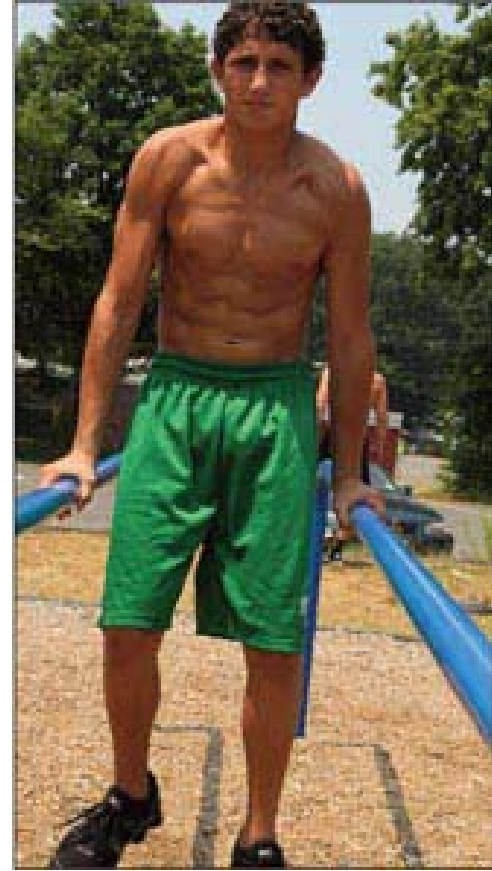
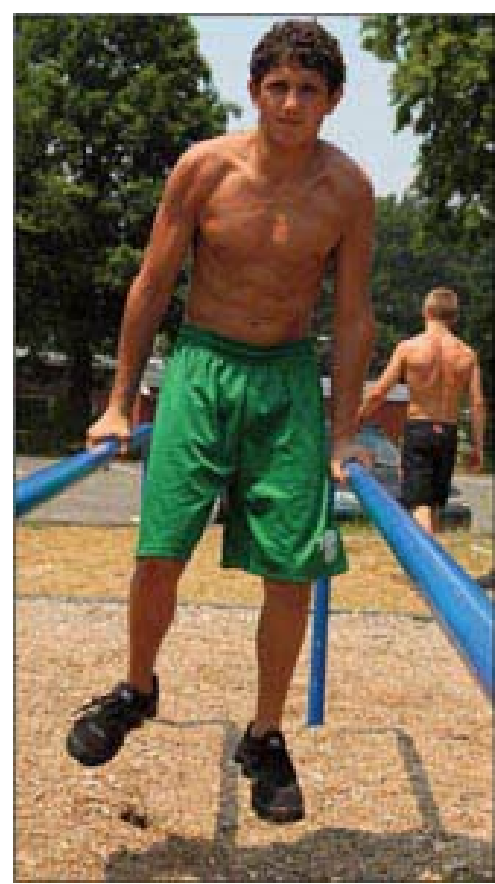
It's best to be strong enough and save those reserves for "go time" during competition or a real life scenario.



Upper Body Playground Bodyweight Pushing Movements

PARALLEL BAR WALK

Walk forward and walk backward on the parallel bars. Keep your shoulders packed tightly while moving smoothly with your hands. You can intensify the hand walking by performing dips and/ or leg raises at the end of the bar each time.



DIP

Keep your elbows tucked close to the body and bend at the arms until the upper arm is parallel to the ground. Perform a complete lock out at the top of each rep and avoid any bouncing in the bottom position.



Wall Walking Variations

Use the wall for various angles of hand walking. I have used these during warm-ups, as part of our workouts, during large team training sessions, and with youth athletes.

Wall walking requires tremendous trunk stability, shoulder stability, and strength. It also improves athleticism. Think about how we walk on our feet all day long. Start putting in some time walking on your hands and your upper body will reap the rewards.

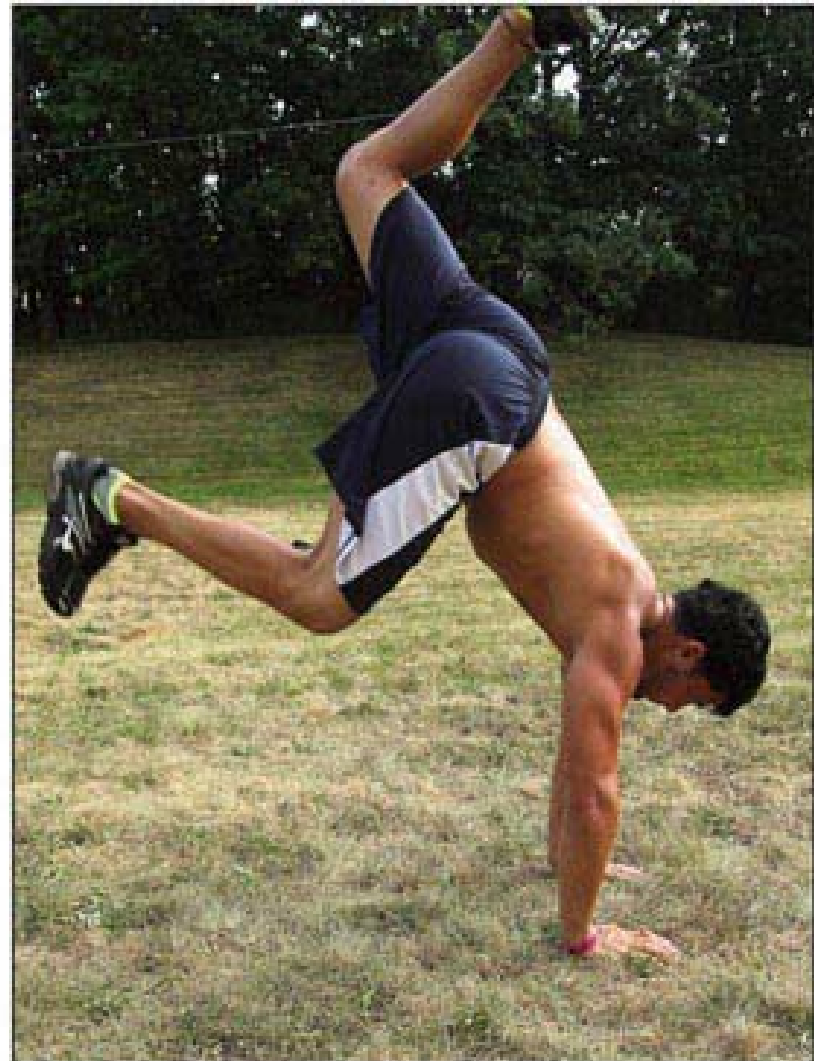
HANDSTAND KICK UP

Start in a mountain climber position, keeping your eyes focused between your thumbs, and do NOT let your head travel forward into the wall. Kick one leg up and the other will follow; slowly hold the handstand position and “float” your feet against the wall.

Common mistakes are to kick up too fast or without control, crashing the legs into the wall and then collapsing the arms, crashing to the floor. Other common mistakes are to collapse the arms as soon as your legs go into the air.

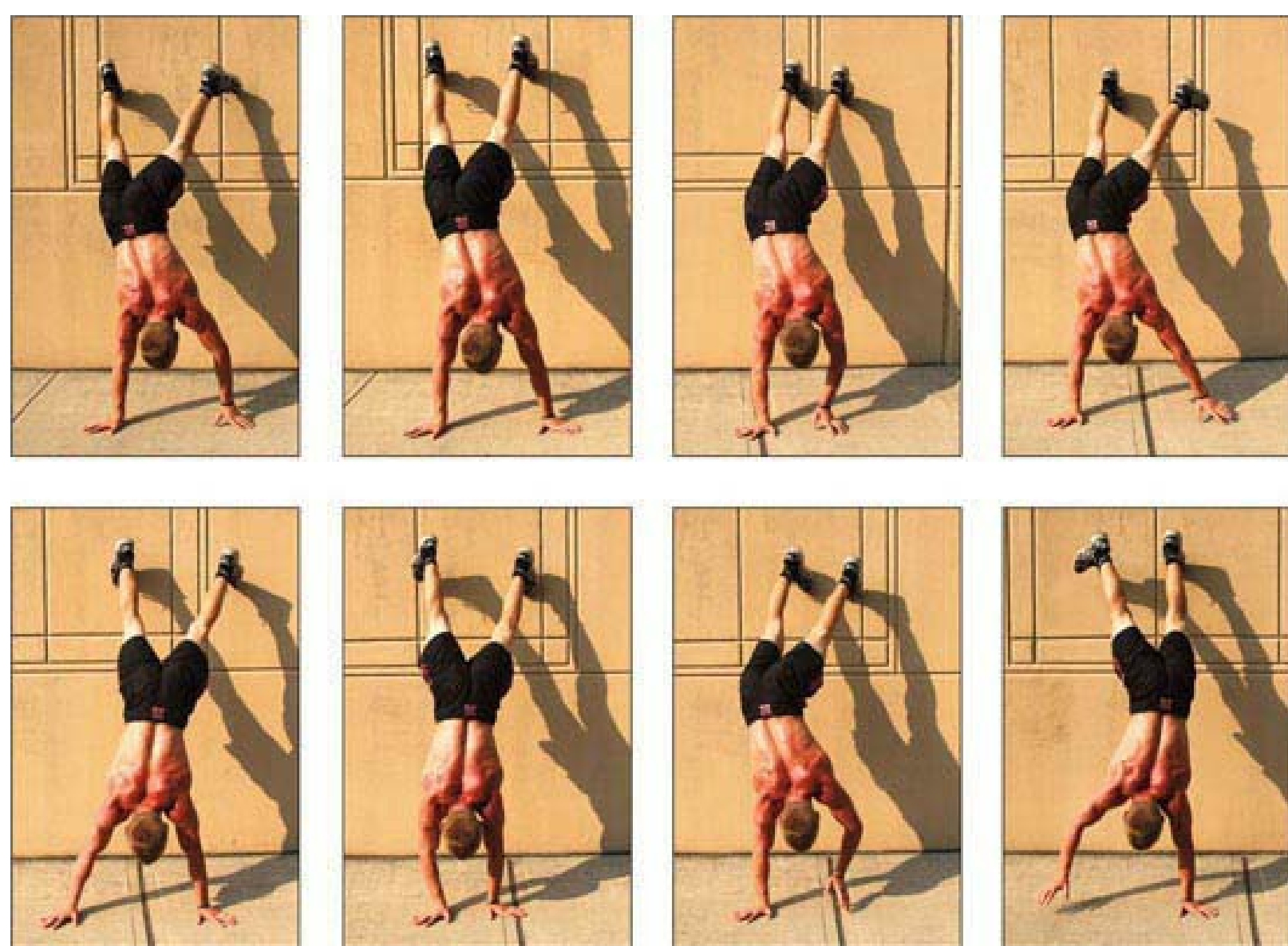


The arms MUST remain locked during the kick up for safety.



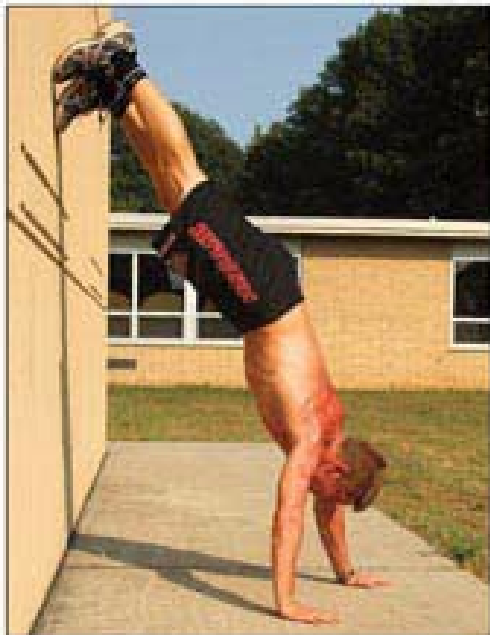
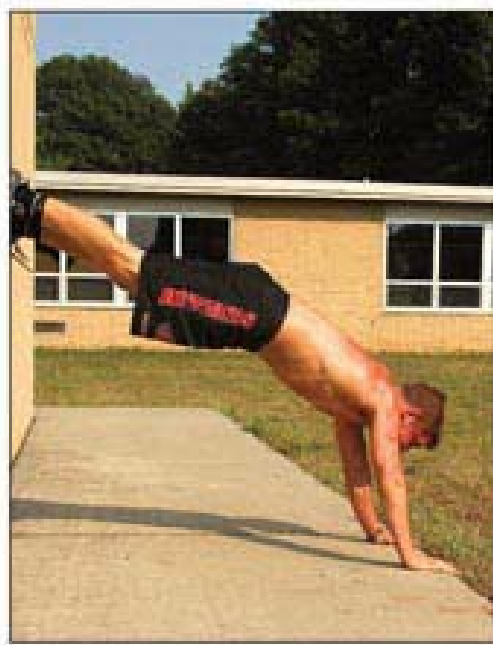
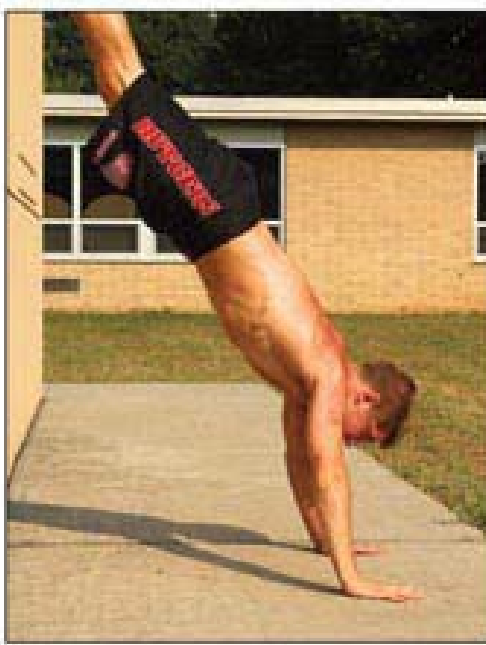
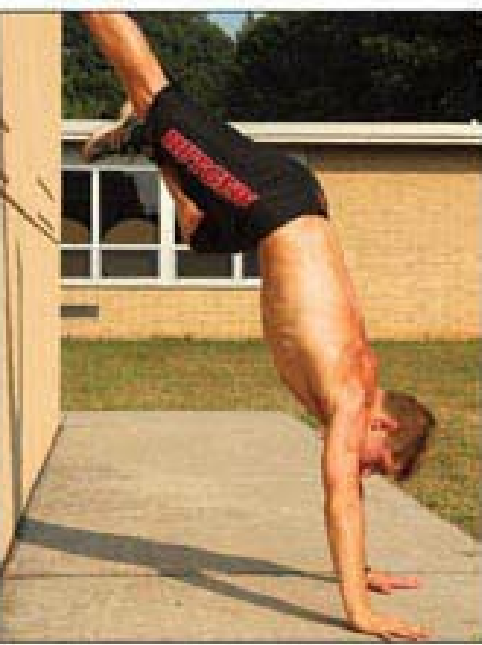
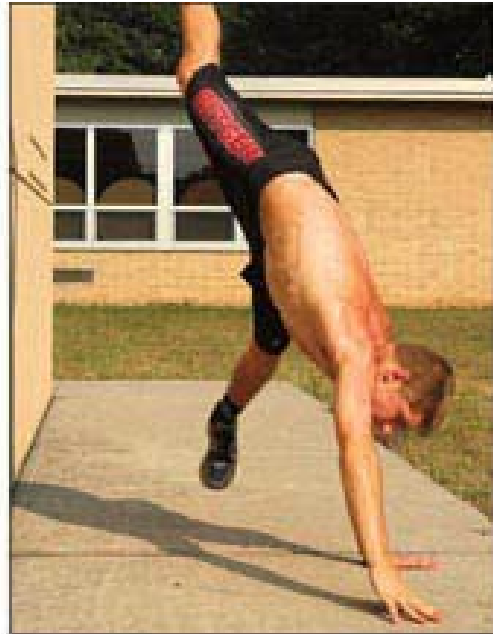
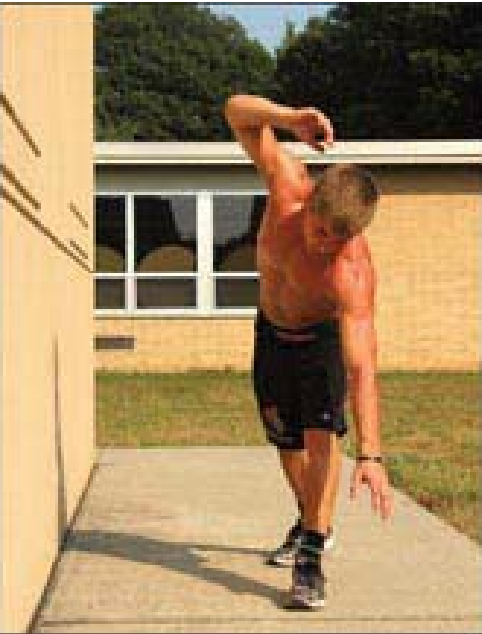
HANDSTAND WALL WALK

Wall walking can be performed up and down or side to side. If traveling side to side, make sure you perform equal steps to each side. The more vertical your body is, the more your shoulders and upper back work. The more horizontal your body is, the greater the stress is on your trunk and abdominal muscles.



CARTWHEEL WALL WALK

As your athleticism increases, you can perform a cartwheel to get your feet onto the wall and then perform your lateral wall walks.



Upper Body Playground Abdominal Training

KNEE TUCK



Hold yourself upright and slowly raise your knees up so your thighs go above parallel to the ground. Hold for a 1 or 2 count at the top, and feel your abs squeezing intensely. Lower straight down, slowly and under control.

Add ankle weights for added resistance.

LEG RAISE

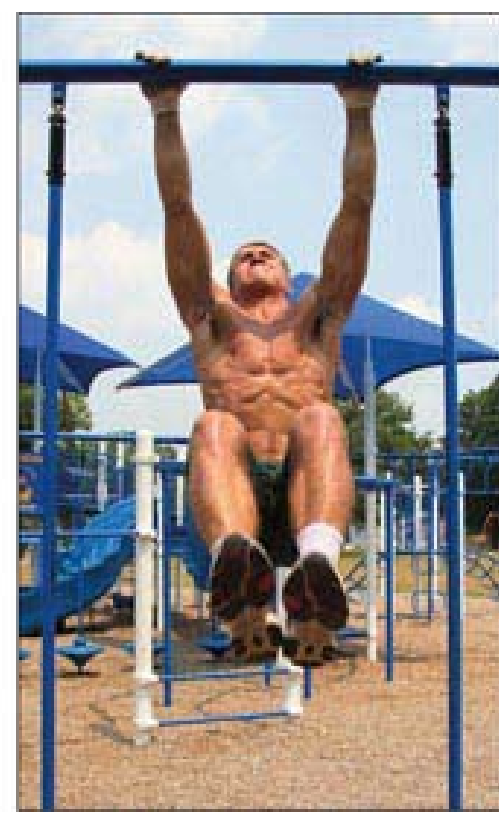
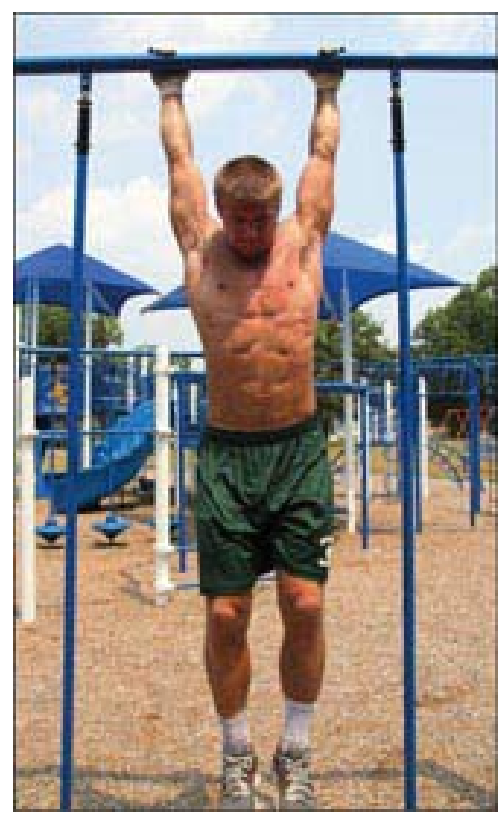
Hold yourself upright and slowly raise your knees up so your thighs go above parallel to the ground. Hold for a 1 or 2 count at the top, and feel your abs squeezing intensely. Lower straight down, slowly and under control.

Add ankle weights for added resistance.



HANGING KNEE RAISE

Jump up on a pullup bar or on monkey bars and engage the lats by slightly bending the elbows. Pull your knees up and bring them to your chest. Lower your legs slowly and directly under your torso. Do not swing or allow your legs to travel behind your torso — this is when swinging and momentum begin taking over this exercise.



HANGING KNEES TO ELBOWS

Take the knee raise to the next level by raising your knees upward and to your elbows. Your elbows will point forward and your body will curl up until your knees reach your elbows.



HANGING TOES TO BAR

The toughest hanging leg raise variation is to bring your toes all the way up to the bar. Keep your knees slightly bent and raise your feet all the way up. Lower your legs under control. A common mistake is to drop the legs. The lowering of your legs is also crucial to abdominal strength.



Table Training

I began using picnic tables for training the day I began training at playgrounds. Everyone laughed at us, but I knew better. I saw the tables as a way for us to train for speed via jumps, in addition to using the tables for light work during our circuits. The guys who were strong would press the tables with one hand.

We may not have looked cool or had the best training equipment, but we made do with what we had. The athletes became accustomed to working in an imperfect environment and avoided becoming spoiled.

TABLE JUMP

Perform these just like a box jump. You can take a step and perform an approach jump, or you can stand still and jump from there.

Both styles of jump require you to swing your arms as you jump and to land properly, with knees slightly bent and feet in an athletic position. Jumping is critical when training for speed and explosive power.

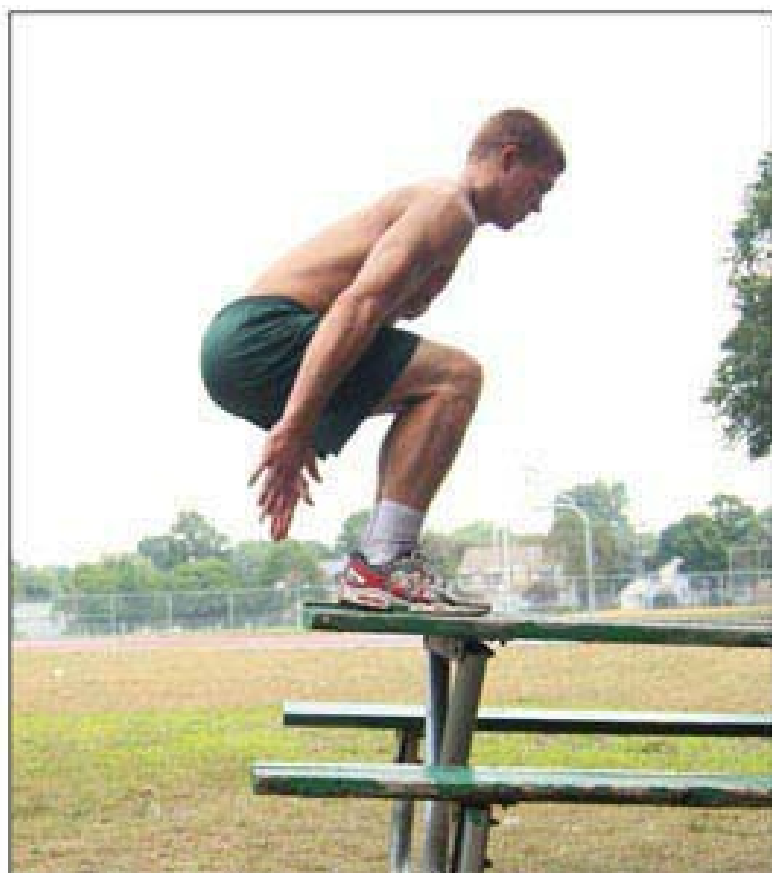
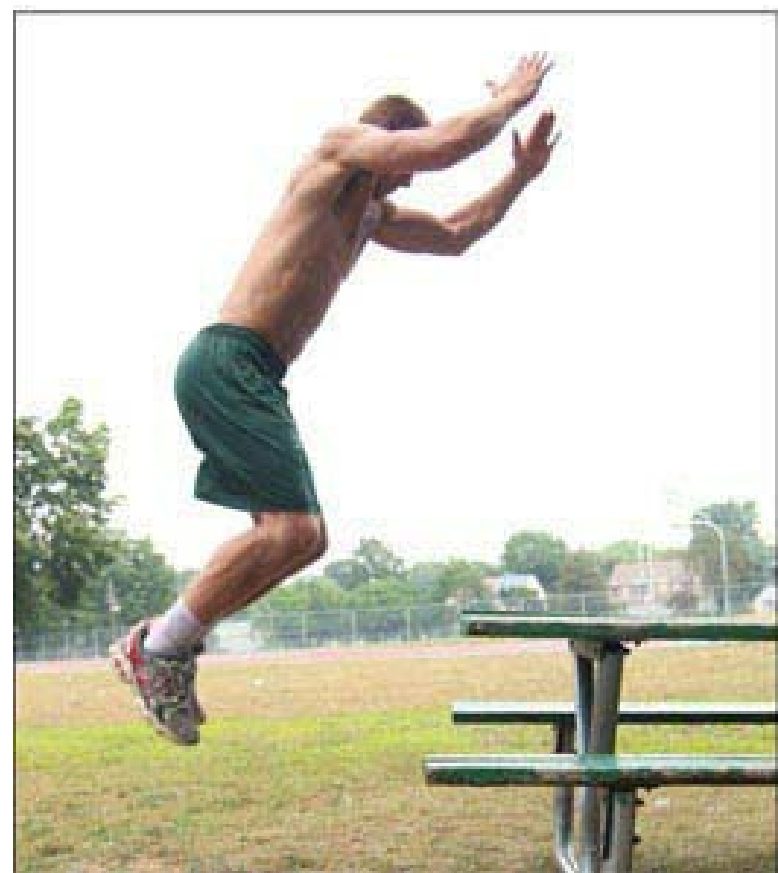
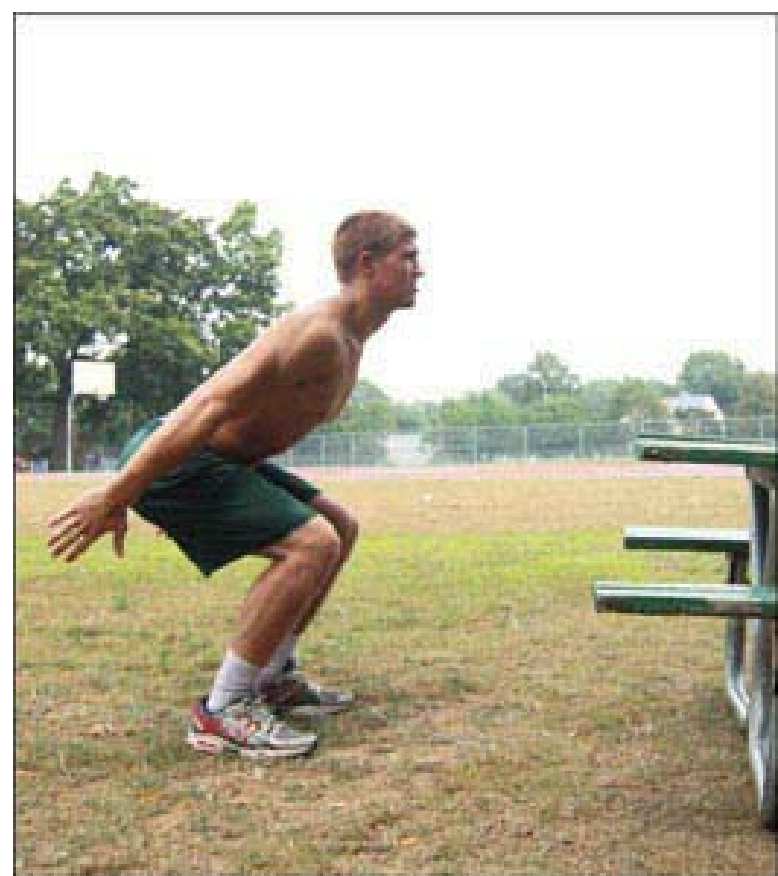


TABLE PRESS

Press with 1 or 2 arms. Keep your elbows in and brace your trunk during the press. The one-arm table press is the natural progression when the two-hand press becomes too easy. You can also perform one-arm presses in plyometric fashion by releasing the table at the

extension of every rep. As always, perform equal reps with each arm.

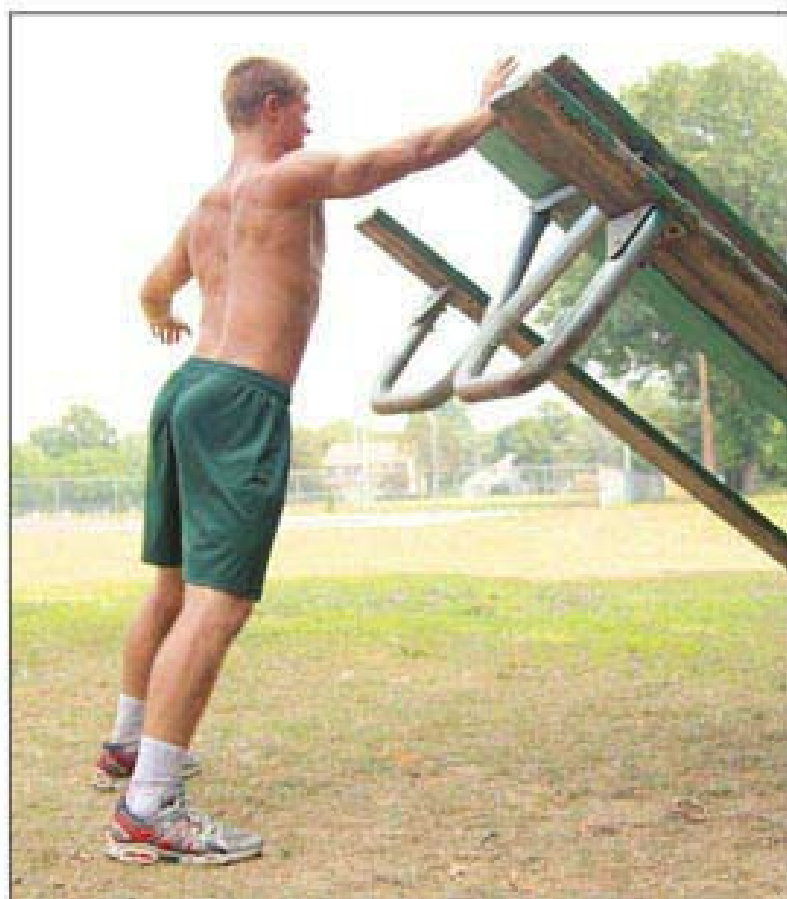
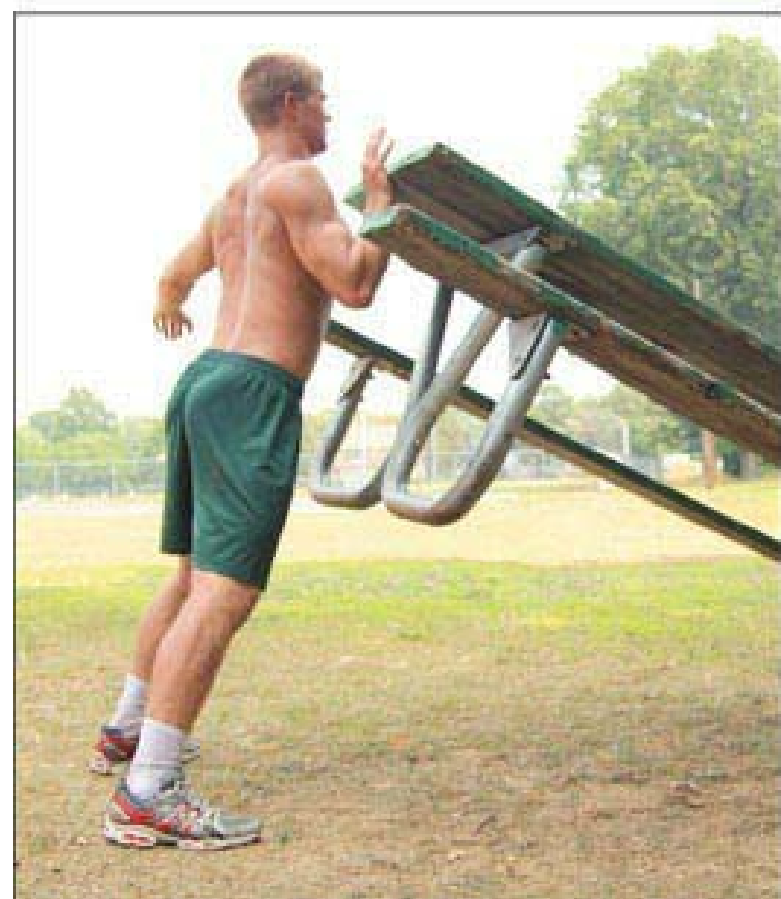
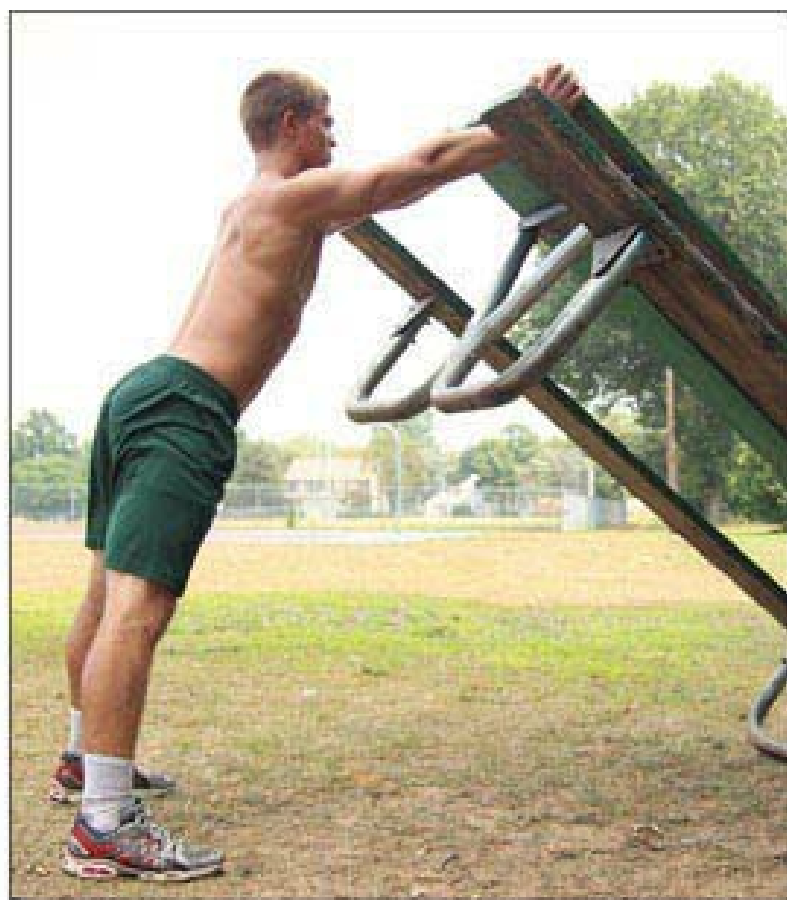


TABLE PLYO PRESS

If normal table presses are too easy, push the table away explosively and catch on the way down, just like a plyo pushup.



TABLE PUSH UP

Place your feet on the bench or table and bang out your pushups. As your feet go higher, your abs will want to sag. Keep the trunk braced and focus on proper technique first & foremost, always.

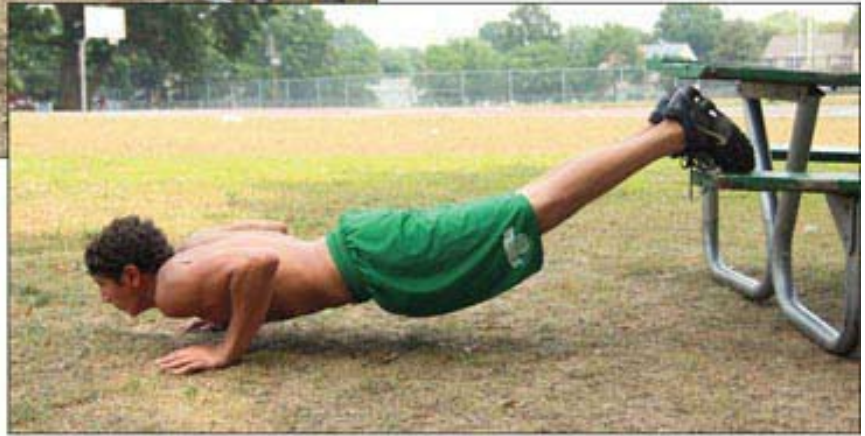
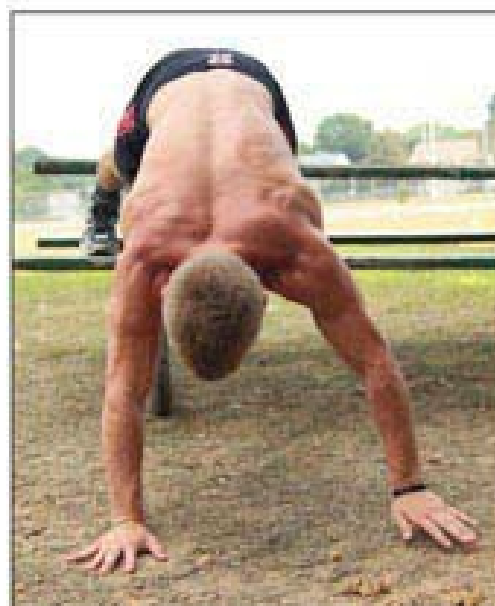
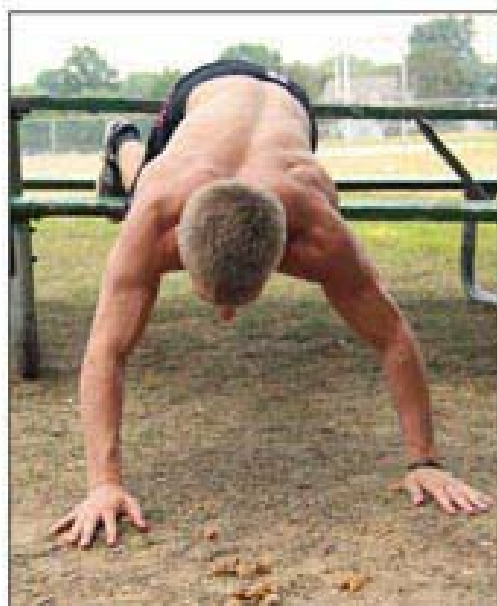
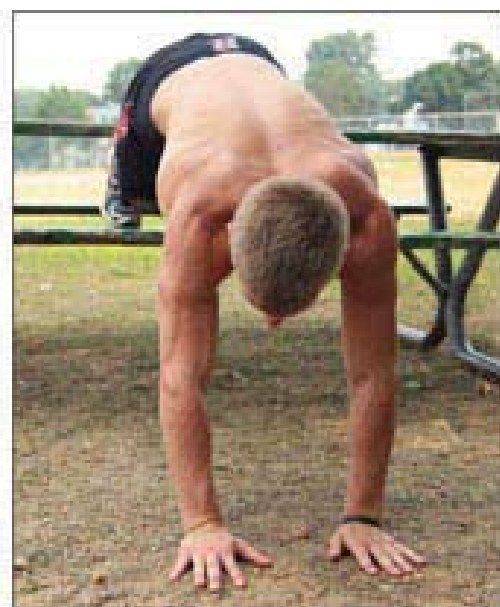
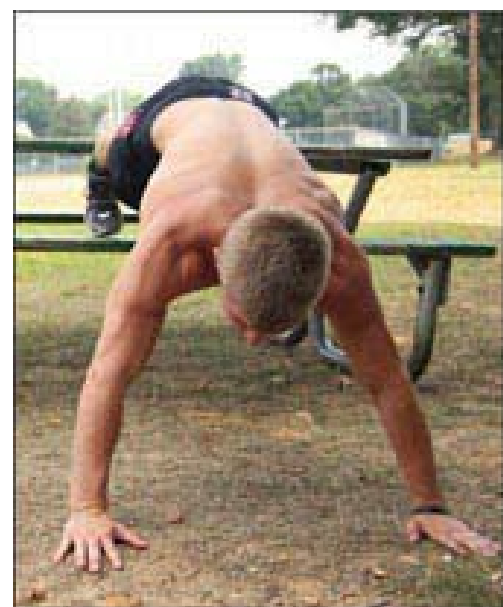


TABLE HAND WALK

When training alone, this is a great alternative to partner hand walks. You can couple hand walking with pushups as well. Try going from one side of the bench and back, or walking all the way around the picnic table and then back again. Remember to perform

equal reps in both directions.



BODYWEIGHT WORKOUTS

BEGINNER BODYWEIGHT WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1A) Squats x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 1B) Pushups x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, reps
- 2) Pullups 3 × 1, 2, 3 reps of ladders (perform 1 rep, rest 30 - 60 sec, 2 reps, rest 30-60 sec, 3 reps, rest 2 minutes, and repeat for 3 rounds total)
- 3) Walking Lunges 3 × 10 / 10 ea. leg
- 4) Sprints 5 × 100 yards

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Jog 1/4 Mile
- 2) Pushups x 25 Total
- 3) Pullups x 10 Total (Recline Row x 30 Total Substitute)
- 4) Squats x 50 Total
- 5) Jog 1/4 Mile

WORKOUT # 3

- 1) 10 Minutes x Max Rounds of A-D
 - A) Pullups x 5
 - B) Pushups x 10
 - C) Squats x 15
 - D) Sprint x 200 yards
- 2A) Reverse Lunges 3 × 6 / 6 ea leg
- 2B) Dip Bar Leg Raise 3 × 12

INTERMEDIATE BODYWEIGHT WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Jog 1/4 Mile
- 2) Sprint 1/4 Mile
- 3A) Clapping Pushups 5 × 2 reps
3B) Squat Jumps 5 × 5 reps
- 4A) Recline Rows x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
4B) Dips x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 5) Pushups 1 x MAX Reps
- 6) Pullups 1 x MAX Reps
- 7A) Pullups 3 × 5 reps
7B) Close Grip Pushups 3 × 5 reps
- 8) Run 1/2 Mile AFAP (As Fast As Possible)

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Lateral Wall Walks 3 × 5L / 5R (5 steps left / 5 steps right)
- 2A) Squat Jumps x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
2B) Recline Rows x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 3A) Pullups 3 x submax reps (90% of max reps ea. set)
3B) Walking Lunges 3 × 10 / 10 ea. leg
- 4) Dip Bar Leg Raise 3 × 10

WORKOUT # 3

- 1) Pushups x 35 total reps
- 2) Pullups x 15 total reps
- 3) Jog 400 yards 1 x
- 4) Sprint 300 yds 2 x
- 5) Sprint 200 yds 2 x
- 6) Sprint 100 yds 4 x

ADVANCED BODYWEIGHT WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Burpees 6 × 15 seconds work / 15 seconds rest

- 2A) Mixed Grip Pullups (Change grip every set) 5 x submax reps (90% max ea. set)
- 2B) Chest Slap Pushups x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 reps
- 3A) Lunge Jumps 4 x 5 / 5 ea. leg
- 3B) Handstand Push Ups 4 x submax reps (90% max ea. set)
- 4) 1/4 Mile Sprints 4 x (Rest 1 min. after ea. set)

WORKOUT # 2

- 1A) High Box Jumps 6 x 3
- 1B) Chest Slap Pushups 6 x 3
- 2A) Vertical Wall Walks x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 reps
- 2B) Rope Climbs 5 x
- 3A) Weighted Dips 4 x 6 - 10 reps
- 3B) Weighted Pullups 4 x 3 - 6 reps
- 4A) V Ups 3 x 10
- 4B) Walking Lunges 3 x 15 / 15 ea. leg
- 4C) Hanging Knees To Elbows (K2E) 3 x 10

WORKOUT # 3

AFAP (As Fast As Possible)

- 1A) Pullups x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 1B) Pushups x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 1C) Squats Jumps x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 1D) Lunge Jumps x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 ea. leg

Tips:

Advanced lifters can add 20-lb weight vest Highly advanced lifters can use weight vest and/or descend by 1 rep each round, not 2 reps: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6...1 rep.

- 2) Run 1.5 Miles AFAP
- 3) Push Ups x 100 AFAP

SANDBAG TRAINING

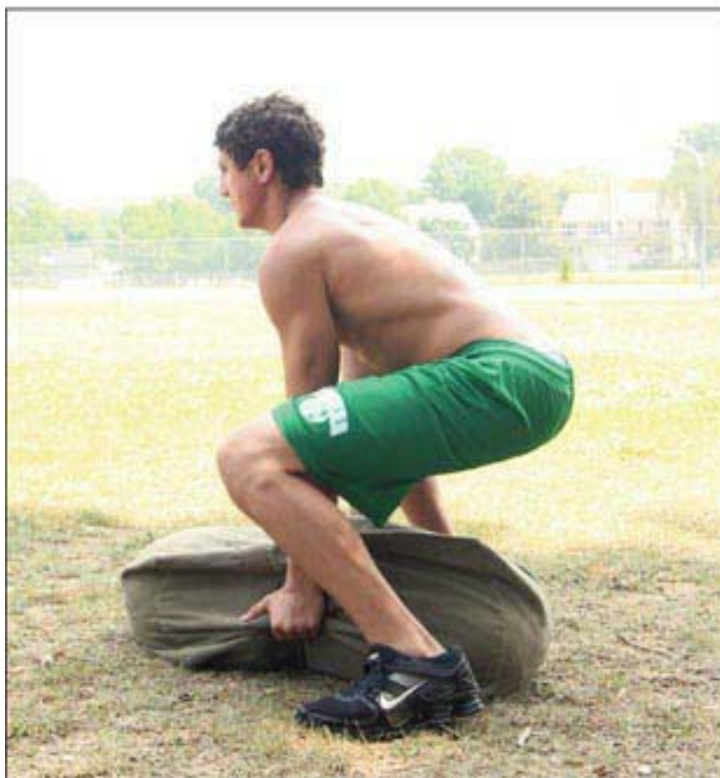
SANDBAG SHOULDERING

Squat down and keep a flat back. Scoop your hands under the bag or grab the bag tightly. Explosively lift the bag while keeping it close to your body. Think about zipping your jacket. Rip the bag from the ground to your shoulder in one motion.

When the bag is on your shoulder make sure you are standing tall. Control the bag to the ground and keep a flat back.

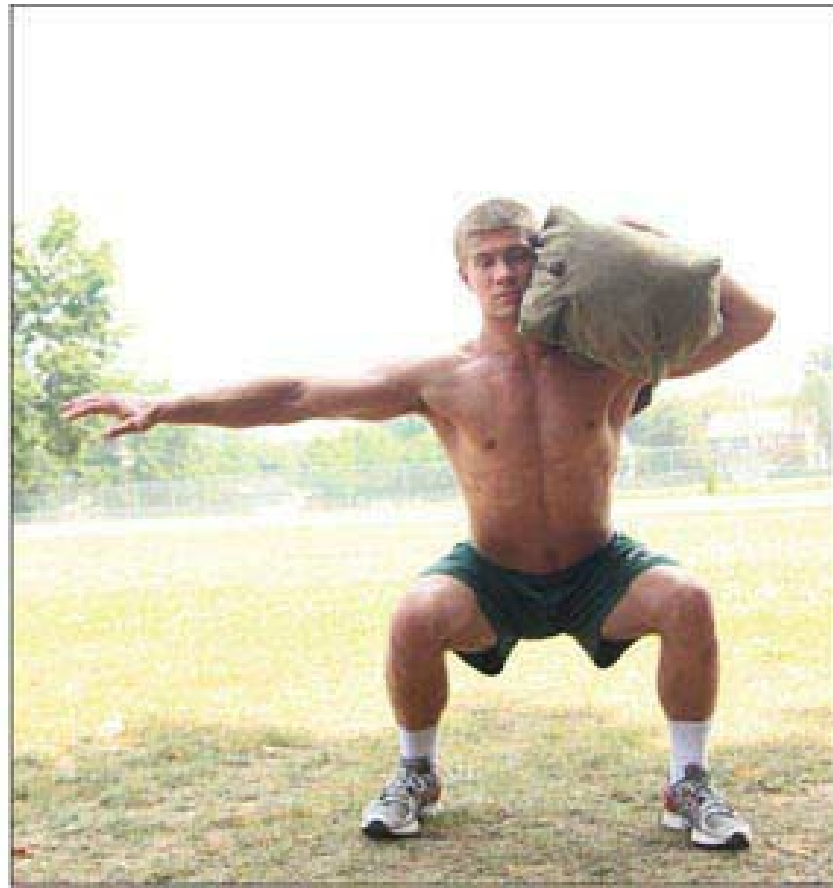
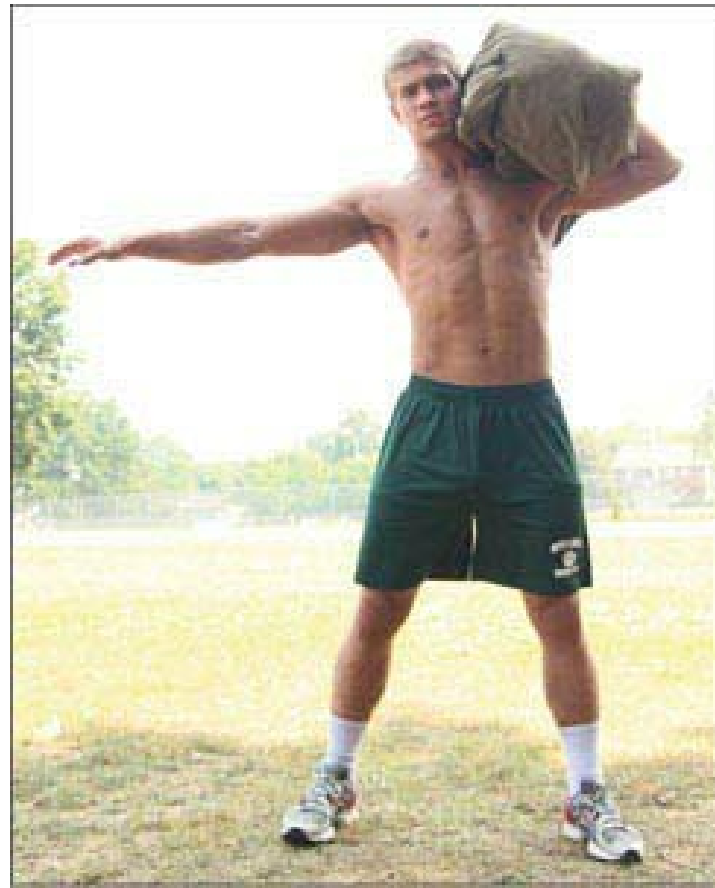
Common mistakes are to round the back or to curl the bag up rather than pulling the bag and keeping it close to your body.

When you pull the bag upright and near your body, it will resemble a barbell high pull. This puts your body in a strong position allowing you to lift more weight and providing a safer way to lift the weight.



SANDBAG SHOULDER SQUAT

Keep the body upright and resist leaning off to the side where the bag is on your shoulder. Instead, intensely stabilize, and resist allowing the weight to push your around.



Squat down into a full squat and then explode upward. As you are near the top of the squat, you can begin pressing the bag overhead so the squat and press blend into one smooth rep.



SANDBAG SHOULDER TO SHOULDER SQUAT & PRESS

You can perform a shoulder to shoulder press with the bag with a slight push press from the legs, or you can be strict and tense your entire body as you would during a barbell military press.

The shoulder to shoulder press is a variation of "off-set" loading, which loads the body from various angles, forcing the body to stabilize and work hard from awkward angles. These awkward angles are very similar to sports and work activities where perfect movements rarely happen. Off-set loading makes the body more durable and less susceptible to injury.



Press the bag to the opposite shoulder and repeat by squatting and switching shoulders

on each rep.

Make sure you fully lock your arms overhead when pressing. A common mistake is to press just high enough to clear the head and then switch shoulders. This ends up being a half rep. Your focus should always be on full range reps.



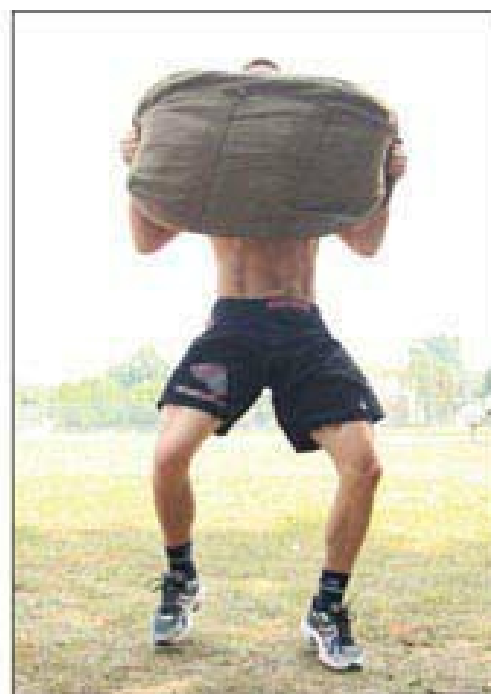
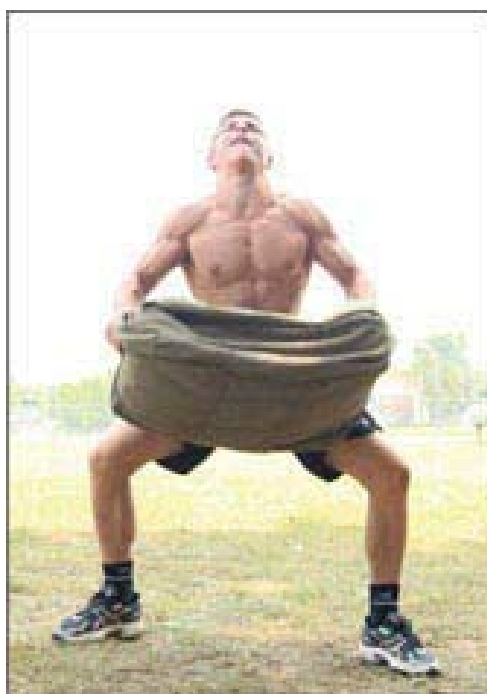
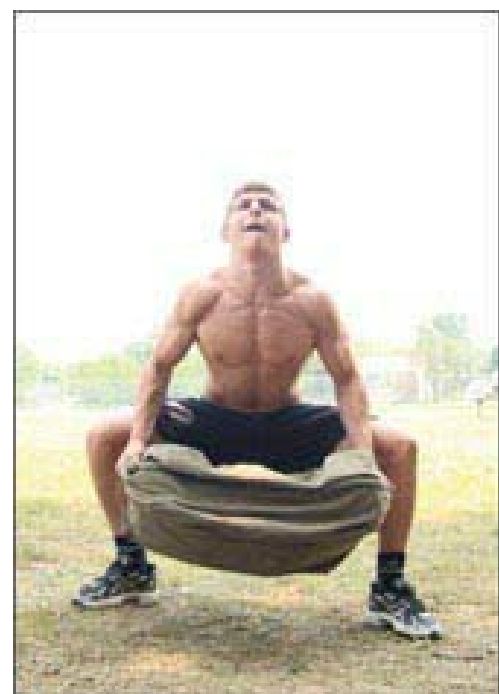
SANDBAG CLEAN AND CATCH

The sandbag power clean or clean and catch is a simple way to teach a quick lift without the technicalities a barbell requires.

Squat down with a flat back and grab the sides of the bag tightly. Keep your back flat.

Stand up explosively and pull the bag upright aggressively. The bag should remain close to your body and will resemble the zipper motion, pulling upward aggressively.

When your elbows are at their highest point, you will release the bag and catch it with arms underneath. This is the Zercher position—what wrestlers call a double underhook.



When you catch the sandbag, make sure you finish standing upright. Then squat the bag down under control, and release to the ground when you reach a full squat.

The hips should be slightly below parallel.

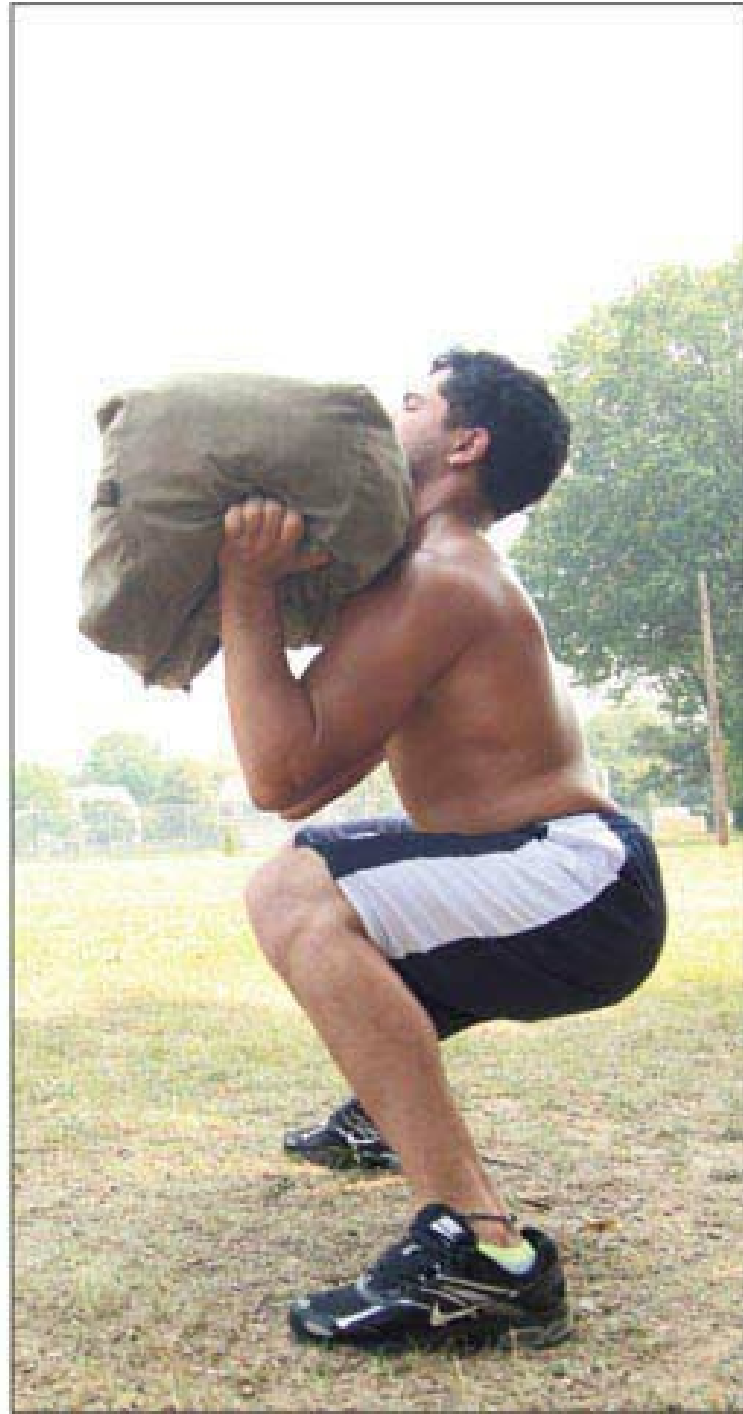
Repeat for prescribed reps.

SANDBAG POWER CLEAN

Squat down with a flat back and straight arms.

Explode up with your chest tall and keep your back flat.

Pull the elbows high as your legs extend, and release the bag into the air, catching with your arms under the bag.



THE BEAR COMPLEX

The Bear complex is brutal! This combo exercise is also brutally effective for strength endurance and mental toughness. I love it.

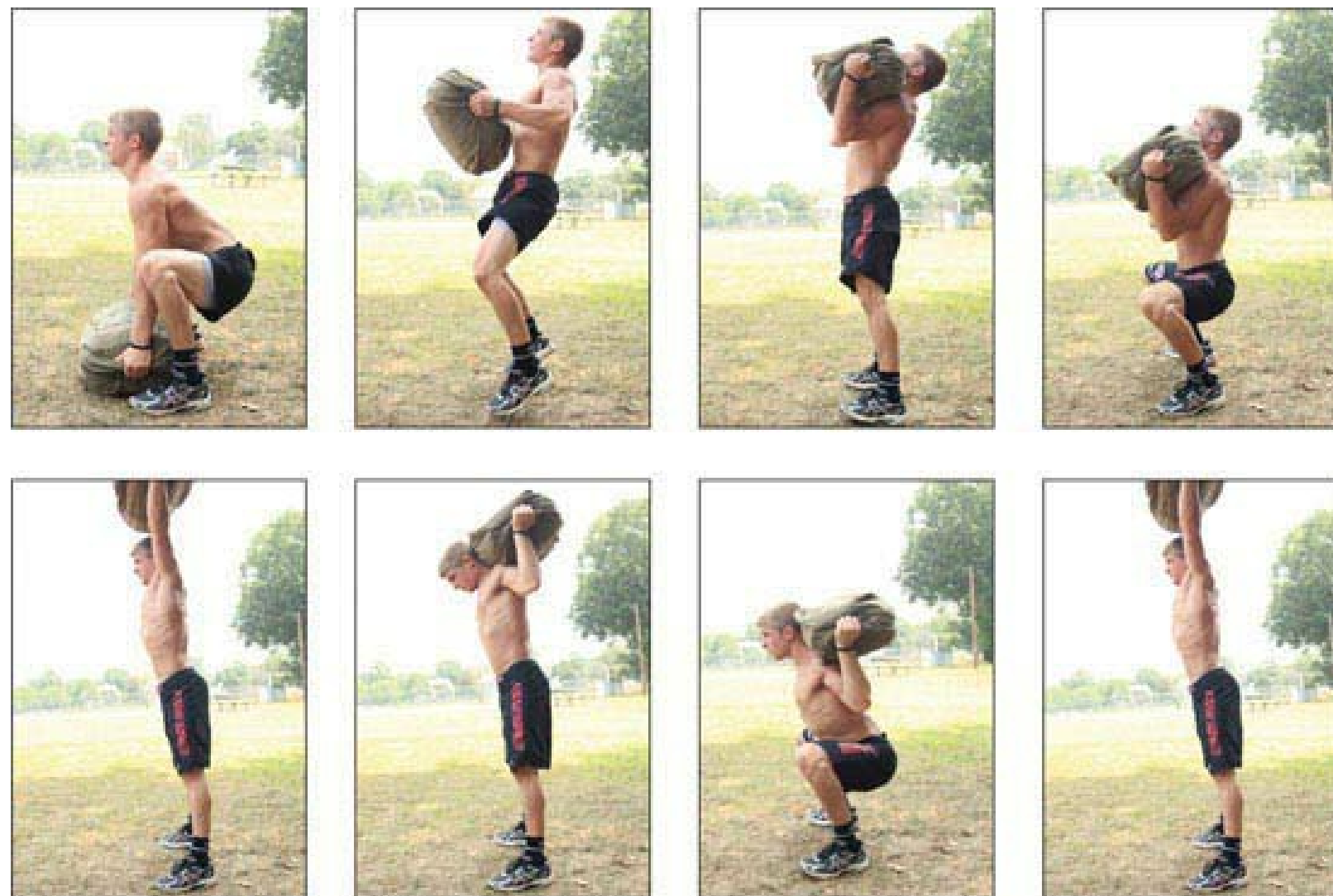
Perform a power clean with the bag, but do not release the bag in the style of the "clean & catch." Instead, pull the bag upright and then flip the elbows and knuckles as you would with a barbell clean. In this "rack" position, your knuckles point up and your

elbows point down.

Next, perform a front squat with the sandbag and then press the bag overhead.

Next, place the bag on your back, perform a deep back squat, and again press the bag overhead to finish the rep. From there, return the bag to the ground. This is ONE rep!

In a nutshell, one rep is a power clean + front squat + overhead press + back squat + overhead press, and then return to the ground and repeat.



SANDBAG SHOULDER LUNGE

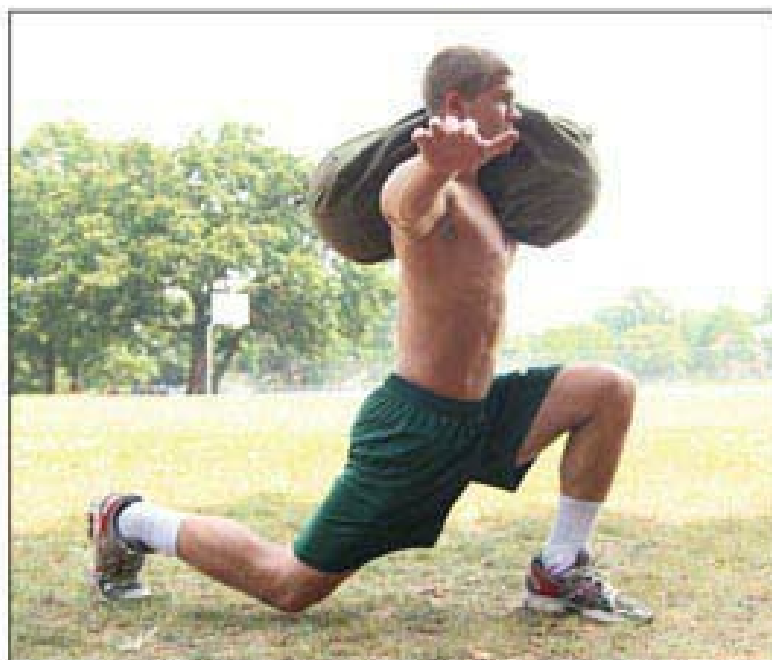
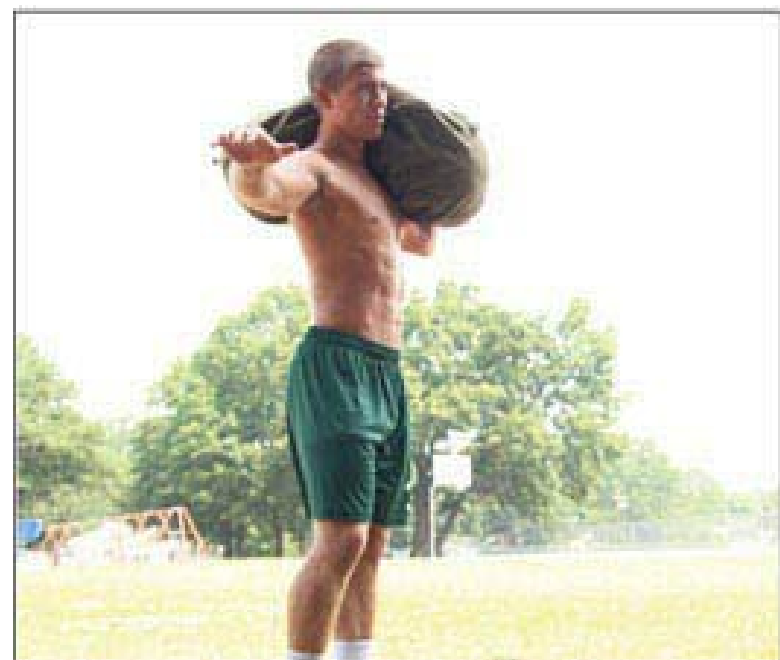
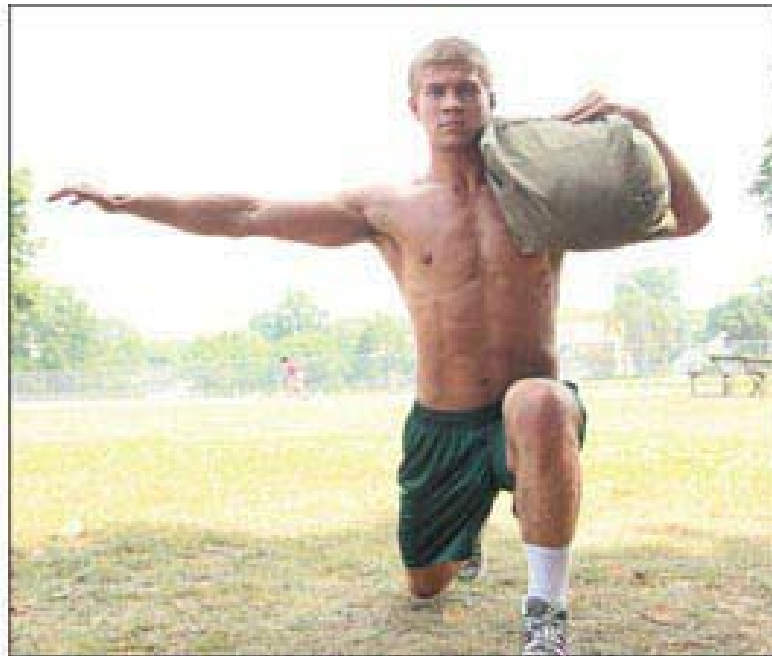
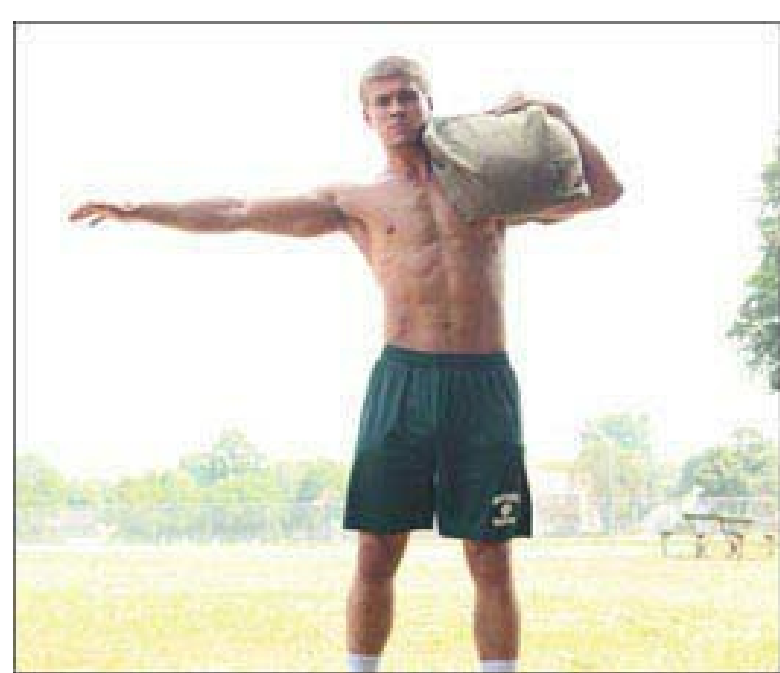
I like to perform lunges with sandbags from various positions: sandbag on your back, on your shoulders, and in the Zercher position. You can lunge reverse or perform them walking style. Alternate forward lunges are tough on the knees when performed weighted, so my preference is walking or reverse.

Each set must begin with a power clean or shouldering, which is great because that 1 rep is your power rep and the volume adds up, ultimately making you stronger and tougher.

Whether you are lunging reverse style or walking, make sure you take a long stride. Your

trail knee should be an inch or two from the ground. Do NOT allow your knee to crash to the ground.

Common mistakes are taking short steps rather than a long step, which tends to cause the trunk to collapse. Keep your trunk tight and upright during each rep.



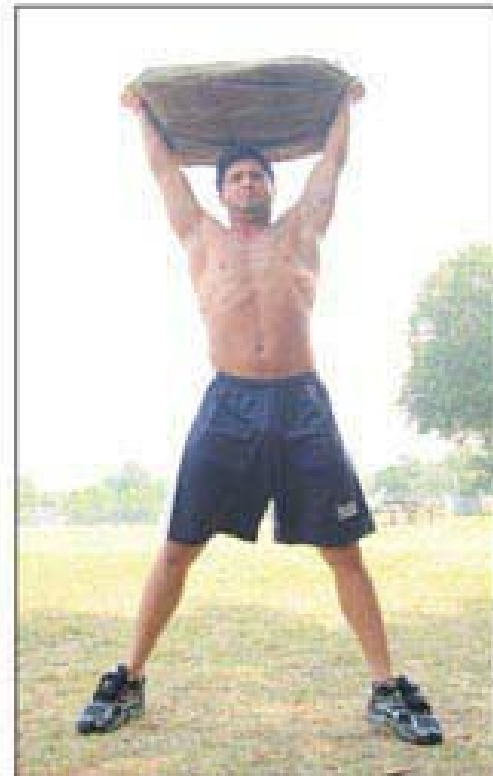
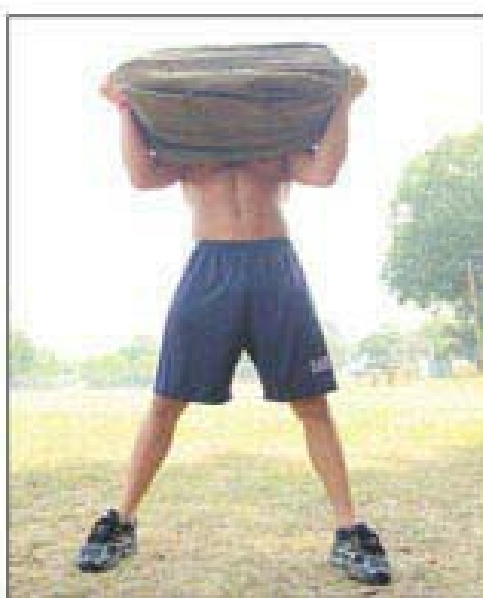
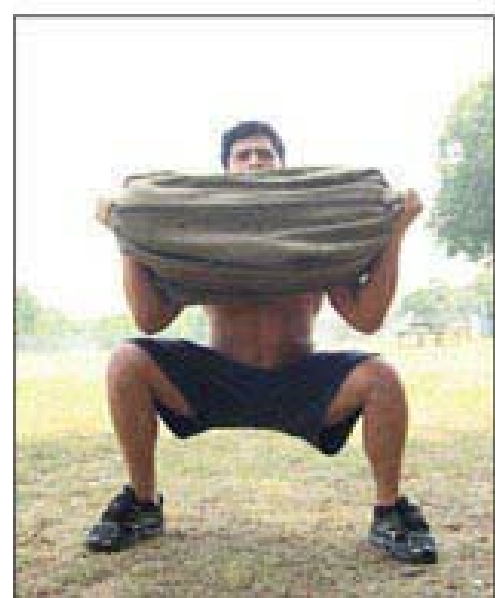
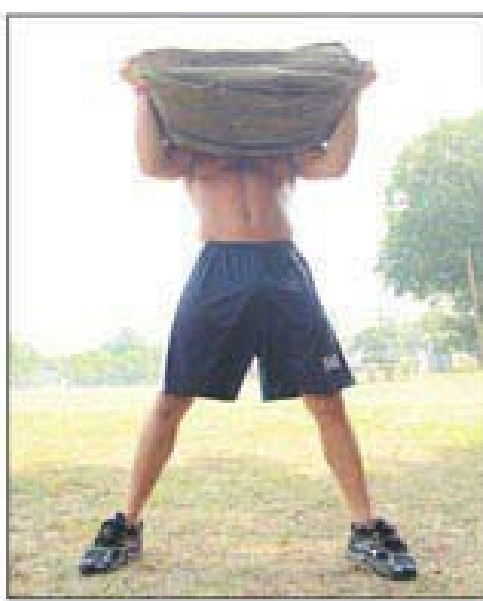
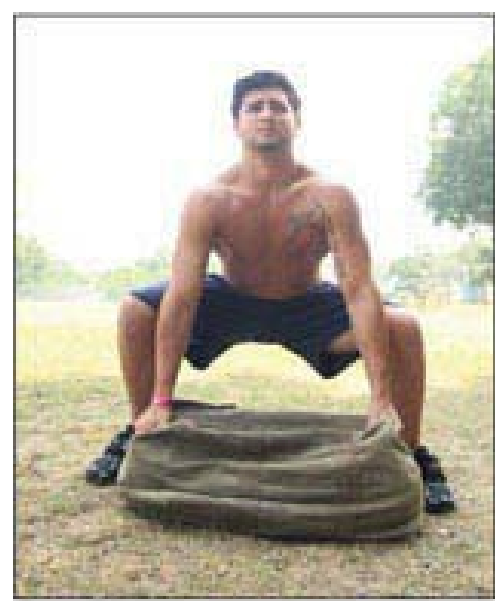
SANDBAG THRUSTER

Power clean the bag and hold tightly in the rack position. Squat to full depth and then explode upward and press the bag overhead for a full lock out.

Common mistakes are not holding your elbows high enough, and dumping the bag at the bottom of the squat. Keep your elbows high and your trunk braced, especially on the way down as well as when pressing the bag overhead.

Relaxing your abs and trunk when pressing the bag overhead will result in an arch of the lower back and excess stress on your spine. Brace the abs at the top of the press.

You can also break this exercise down into one movement at a time, such as only front squatting or only overhead pressing. This is a great way to reduce the learning curve and focus on the basics one step at a time.



SANDBAG GET UP

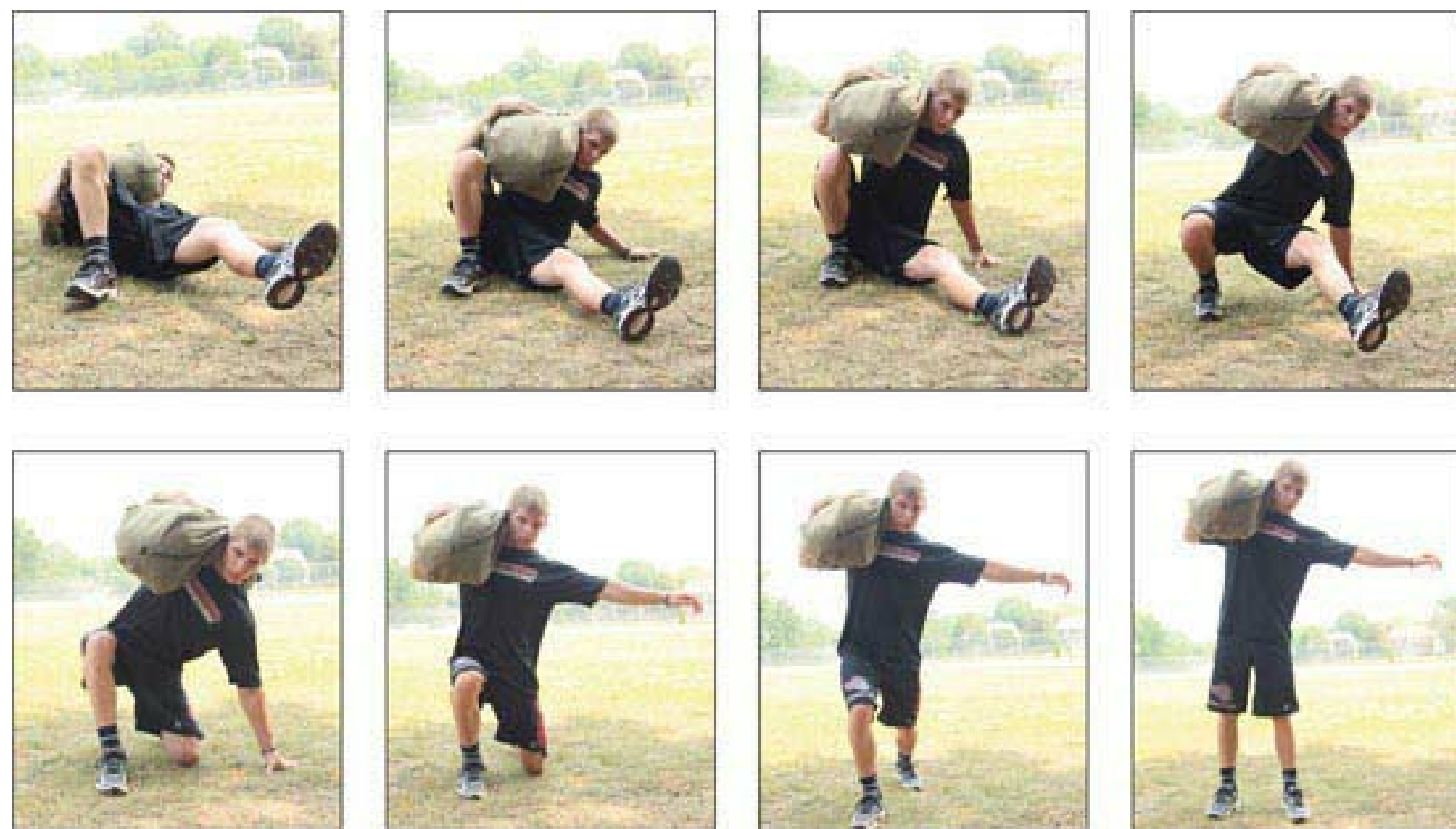
Begin with a very light sandbag. Place the bag on your right shoulder and lay back. Bend your right leg and plant your right foot aggressively onto the ground.

Place your left arm approximately 45 degrees away from your body. Drive with your right foot into the ground, push with your left hand, and perform a situp, angling your body slightly left rather than straight up. Your abs, legs, and upper body are working together here.

Post your left hand down firmly. Straighten your left arm and ensure your shoulder is not shrugged into your ear. Your shoulder must be stable, which will happen when you post your hand and arm aggressively into the ground.

Lift your hip and feed your left leg under and behind your body until your left knee is on the floor, as if you were in the bottom of a lunge.

Remove your left hand from the floor and lift your trunk upright, and then stand up with the sandbag on your shoulder. To get back down to the ground, reverse this get-up. Left leg performs a reverse lunge. Left hand down to the ground, posted strong and stable. Lift your hips high and feed the left leg to go back in front of your body. Slowly lower your butt to the ground and lie back slowly and under control. Switch shoulders and repeat for prescribed reps.

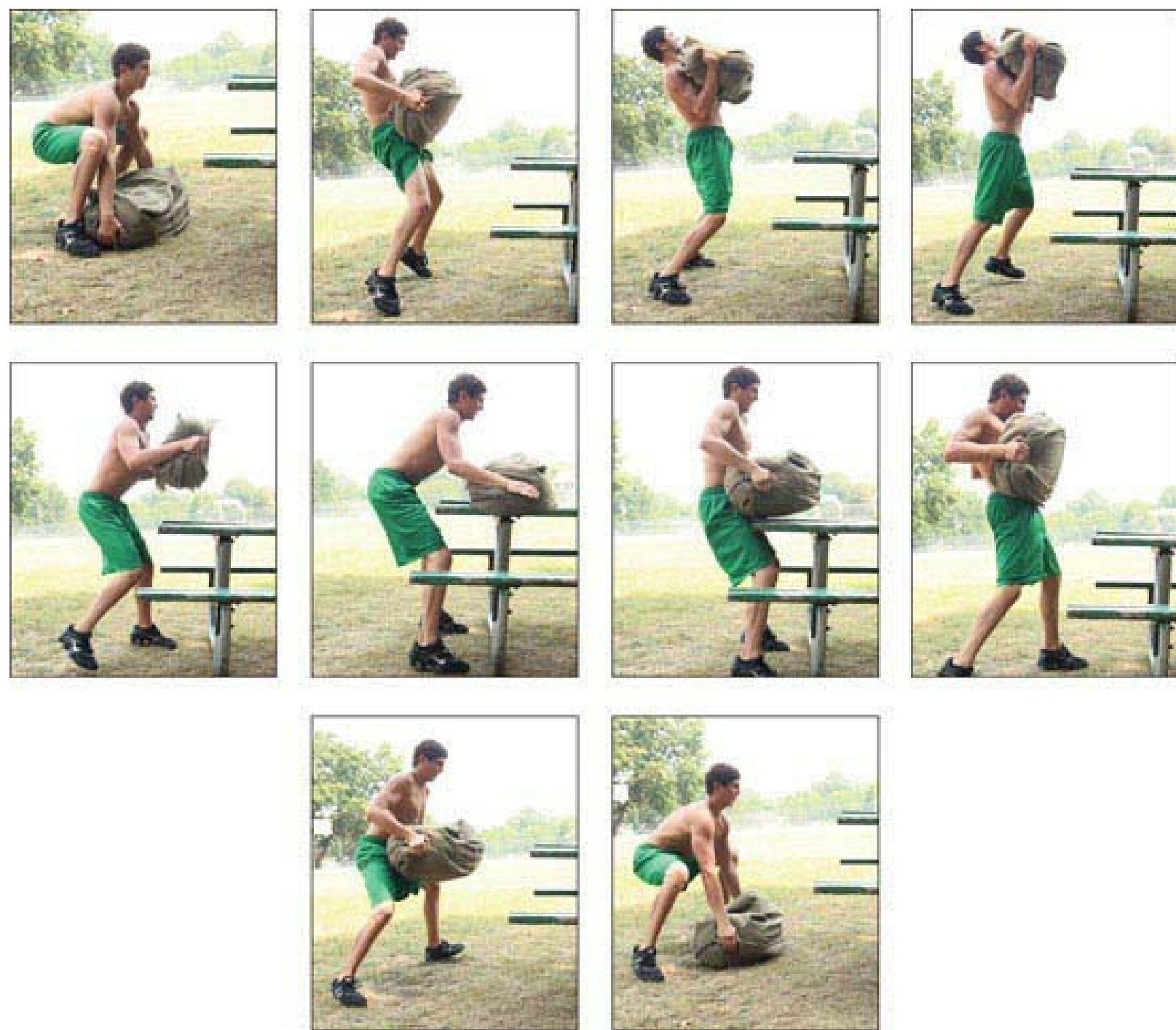


SANDBAG LOADING

Very similar to the clean and catch, you will now perform a power clean and place the sandbag on the picnic table or any object in front of you. My training partner used to have a lifted pick-up truck, and the bed of his truck was the height of my sternum. We would load the sandbag on and off the bed of his truck.

This motion is very similar to the Atlas stone loading you see in World's Strongest Man Competition. You can increase the intensity of this exercise by using various weights of sandbags.

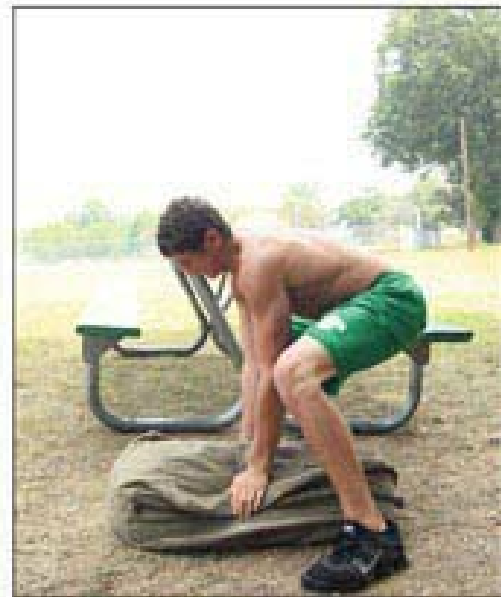
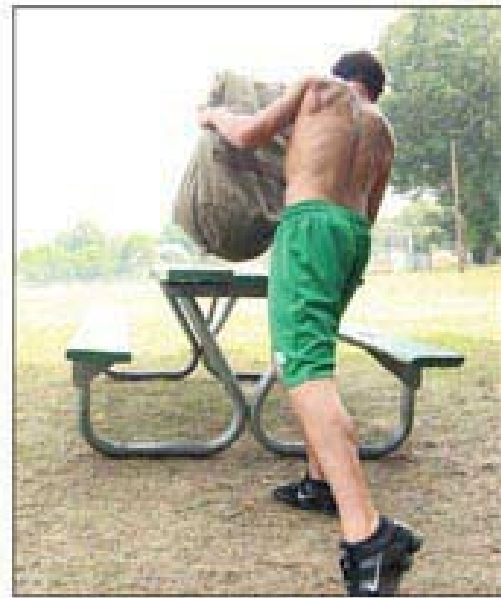
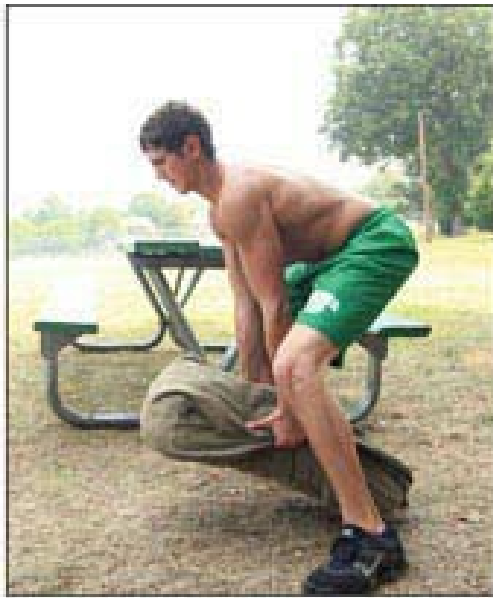
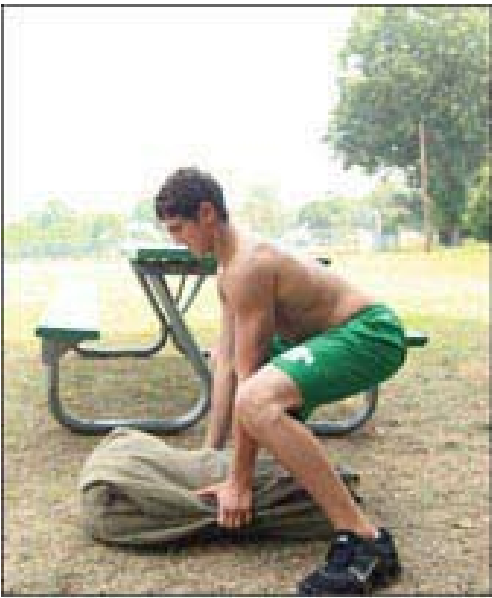
The next level of intensity is to place the sandbags 50 - 100 ft away from the loading platform, forcing you to add sprints and carries to the loading.



SANDBAG ROTATION

The versatility of the sandbag allows you to train the body from multiple angles; rotational loading is one of those angles. You can place the bag between your feet or on the opposite side of your body for loading.

You can use a heavier bag and lift just enough to clear the loading platform, or go slightly lighter and lift the bag up and over chest height for greater power.

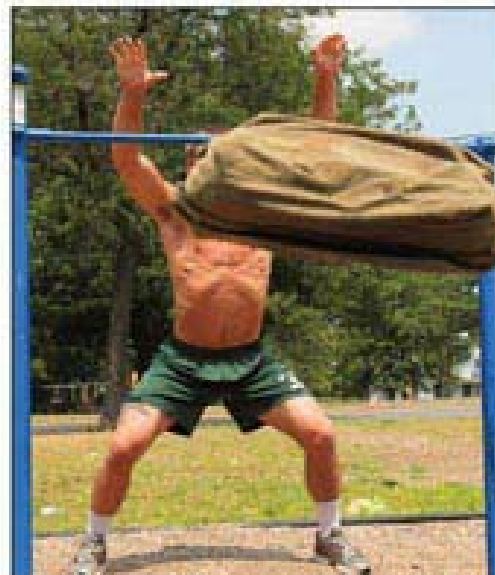
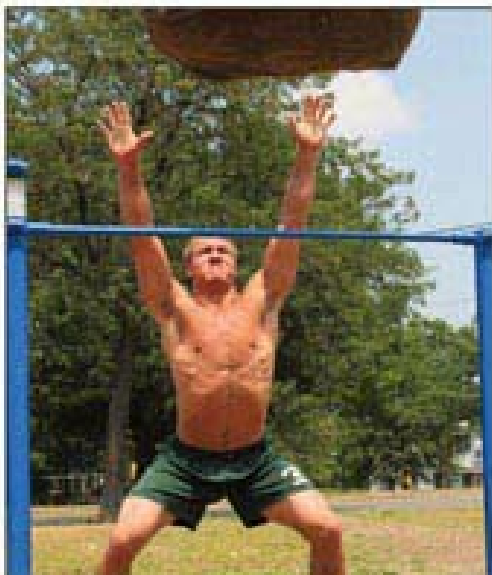
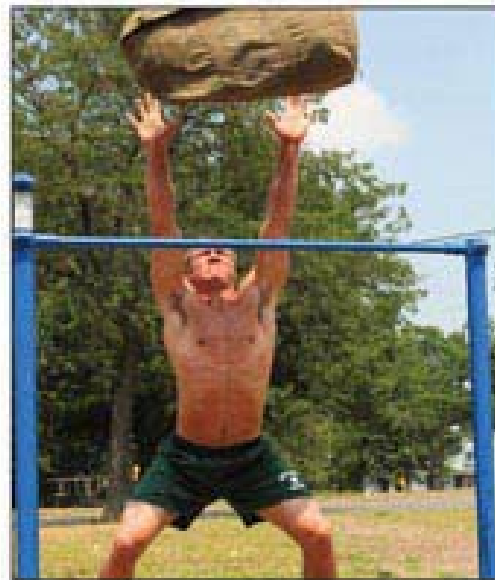
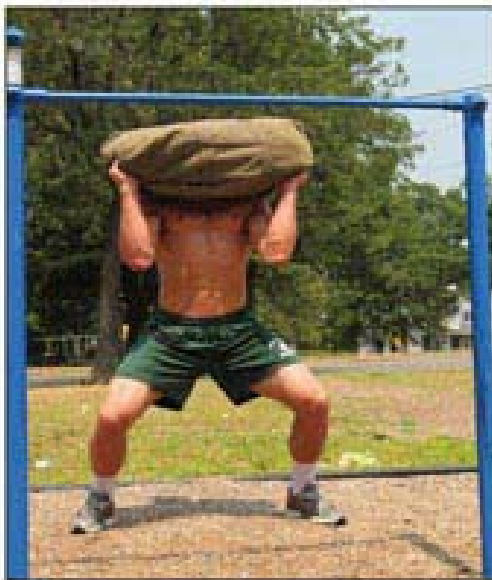
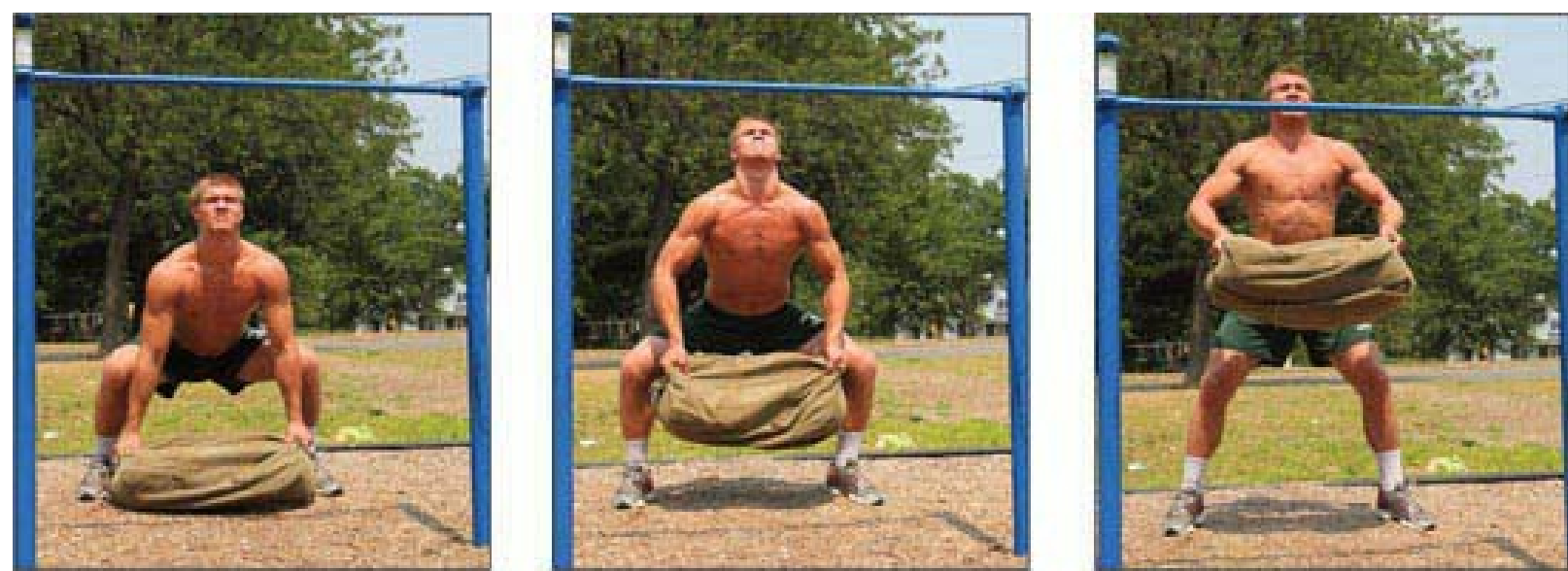


SANDBAG CLEAN THROW

Throwing objects is the ultimate way to develop power. When throwing your sandbag,

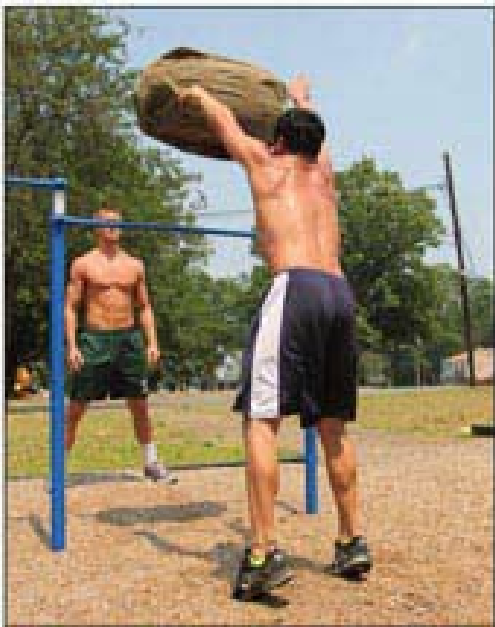
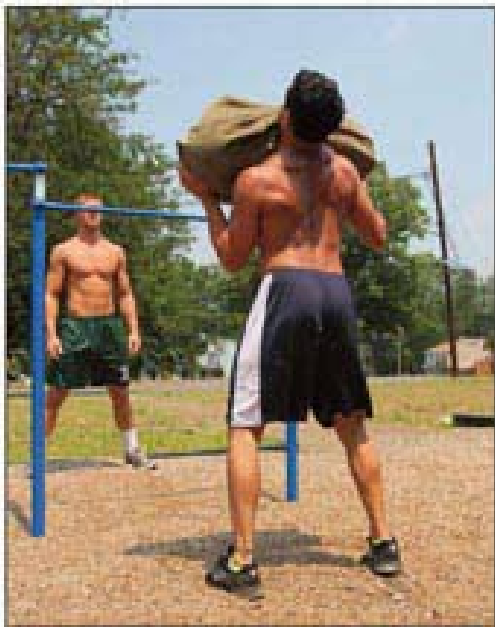
make sure you are throwing on grass or sand to prevent your bag from falling apart.

Perform a power clean and then step forward with one foot and aggressively throw the bag over an obstacle or simply throw it forward as far as possible.



PARTNER CLEAN THROW

If you have a partner for throwing, you can go back and forth pushing the pace for time or prescribed reps.



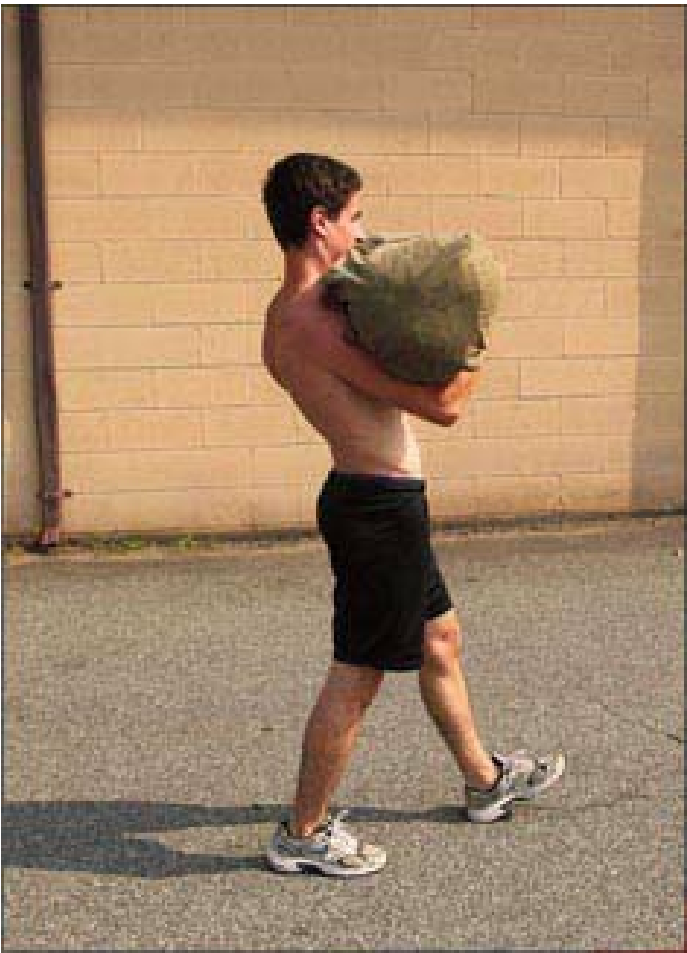
SANDBAG SADDY (7EDCUEB)

SANDBAG CARRY (ZERCHEN)

Power clean the bag and catch it with double underhooks. Keep your abs braced and avoid leaning back.

Hold your hands up around shoulder level and carry the bag for time or distance.

Common mistakes are using a bag that's too heavy, which forces you to lean back, rendering you unable to hold the bag high enough. Technique is always your priority to achieve maximum results from prescribed exercises.



SANDBAG CARRY (OVERHEAD)

I reserve this exercise for advanced lifters, as it is very intense on the entire trunk and shoulders.

Perform a clean and press. Your arms must be fully locked overhead, and your abs should brace to avoid arching of your lower back.

Walk slowly.



End the set when you feel you are about to lose stability in the trunk and shoulders; do not continue the set where technique deteriorates. The key is to stop right before technique begins to falter.

SANDBAG & BODYWEIGHT WORKOUTS

BEGINNER SANDBAG WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Shouldering 5 × 3 / 3 ea. side
- 2) Zercher Squat 5 × 5
- 3) Shoulder Carry 3 × 100 ft (switch shoulders at 50 ft mark)

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Walking Lunge (Sandbag In Zercher Position) 3 × 8 / 8 ea. leg
- 2) Clean & Press 5 × 3 reps (From ground every rep)

WORKOUT # 3

- 1A) Clean & Press x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 reps
- 1B) Mixed Pull ups x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 2A) Back Squat (Clean & Press Bag Onto Your Back To Start Each Set) 5 × 5
- 2B) Sprint 5 × 200 yards
- 3A) Zercher Carry 3 × 100 ft
- 3B) Lunge Jumps 3 × 5 / 5 ea. leg

INTERMEDIATE SB WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Bear Complex x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 reps
- 2) Zercher Reverse Lunges 4 × 6 / 6 ea. leg

- 3) Overhead Carry 3 × 50 ft.

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Clean & Throw x 15 reps AFAP (Clean, Throw for Max Distance Jog To Bag & Repeat for 15 Total Reps)
- 2) Clean & Catch x 15 Total Reps AFAP
- 3) Shoulder & Squat Combo (Alternate Shoulders Ea. Rep) 5 × 3 / 3

WORKOUT # 3

- 1) Clean & Catch x 15 reps AFAP
- 2A) Weighted Pullup Ladders 3 × 1, 2, 3 reps
- 2B) Handstand Pushups Ladders 3 × 1, 2, 3 reps (Rest 2 minutes after the 3rd rep of each ladder)
- 3) Thrusters x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 4) Sprint Forwards / Backwards 10 × 50 ft ea. direction

ADVANCED SB WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Get Ups x 10 each side AFAP
- 2) Zercher Carry x 1/4 Mile AFAP (10 Push Up Penalty Anytime Bag Touches The ground)
- 3) Back Squat x 15, 10, 5 reps

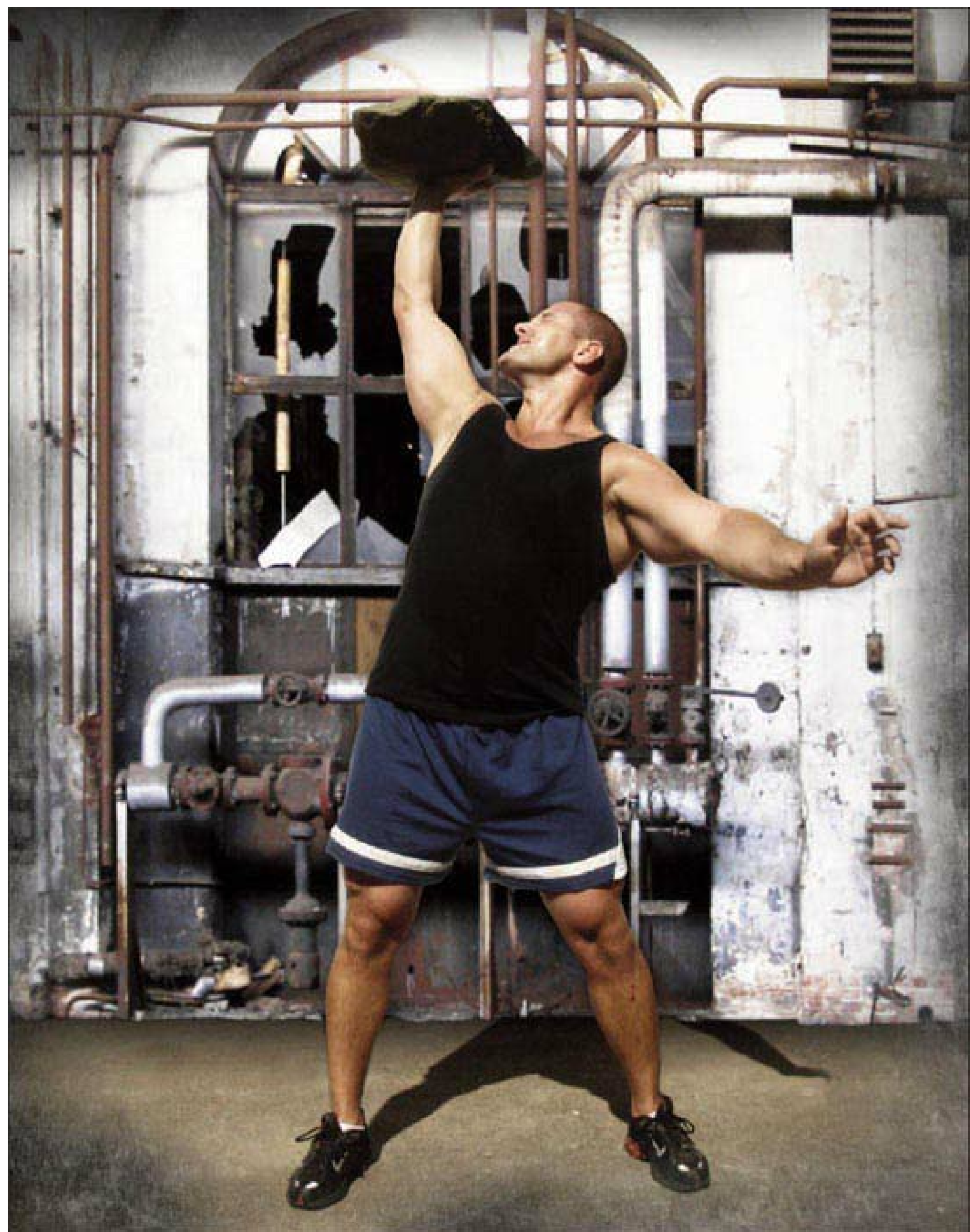
WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Shoulder To Shoulder Squat & Press 4 × 5 / 5 ea. side
- 2) Rotational Loading 4 × 3 / 3 ea. side
- 3) Forward Loading x 20 reps AFAP
- 4) Reverse Lunges 3 × 5 / 5 ea. leg

WORKOUT # 3

The Underground Sandbag Challenge:

- Shoulder the bag 30 Reps (15 reps ea. side) and then 30 pull ups AFAP.
- The bag should be 50-75% of your bodyweight.
- Do not perform pull ups until all 30 shouldering reps are complete.
- Chin must clear bar on every rep of pullups.



STONE TRAINING

I began using stones in my training when I first transitioned from “personal trainer” to strength coach while living with my parents. Our back yard was lined down the center with a row of stones of various shapes and sizes.

I was training a few athletes in the cramped one-car garage, and was lucky enough to remind myself of the old episodes of WSM (World’s Strongest Man) that I saw on TV from the 80s. I remembered stones being used, and decided to make due with what little “equipment” I had available.

This time was around 2002 or 2003, and I was a 4th or 5th year physical education teacher and wrestling coach. I wished I had used these stones back when I was a wrestler instead of doing the pec deck, leg extensions, and other useless exercises.

At the time, I had one barbell, a few dumbbells, and was somewhat swayed into the craze of “functional training.” Back then, functional training was equated with standing on one foot while doing dumbbell curls or standing on wobble discs, benching off stability balls, and doing circus acts in general. It all looked cool and looked advanced, and I am still shocked at how I was fooled into thinking that training in such clownish methods would actually produce dominant athletes. The big buzz was that this training developed “core strength.”

In my heart I knew training on one leg or pretending to be in the circus would never help my athletes dominate. There was no mental toughness being developed. The stones in the backyard offered the perfect compliment to the old school bodybuilding I had these athletes doing.

I used the basic lifts with the stones as you would a barbell: deadlift, bent over row, squats, lunges, carry, clean and press. Nothing fancy. Just the tried and true basics.

Whenever I need a kick in the ass, I get outside and hit a stone training workout and sometimes mix in some bodyweight work. Exercising in nature is the way to go when you need a good ol’ gut check workout.

One of my earliest memories of a stone training workout was when I saw new construction going up a few miles from my house so I decided to ride my bike there after hours when the construction crew went home for the day.

I tested the stones to make sure I wasn’t expecting others to do what I wasn’t going to do. I attacked the stones that were scattered through the desolate construction zone. I did

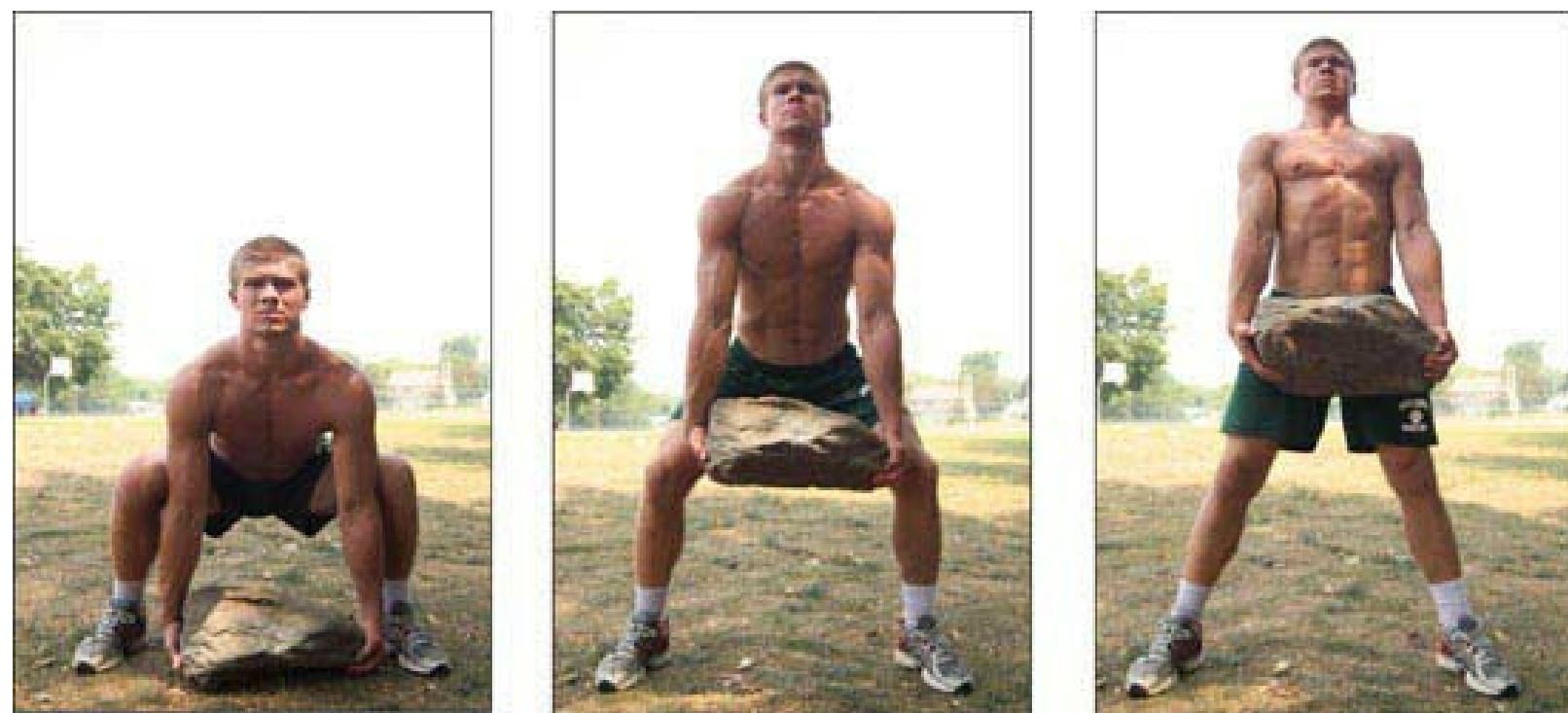
carries, clean and presses, bent over rows, and even found smaller stones to grab in each hand for some side raises and curls.

The stones kicked my ass, and the next day my forearms and hands were crushed. My back felt sore in spots I had never felt before. I knew that wrestling with a heavy stone off the ground for carries, presses, and squats would prove powerful for athletes. I also felt the mental challenge that came with odd objects. The most successful athletes I had come across all had the ability to endure challenges, both physical and mental. The mental aspect was a big focus for me, anything that was challenging beyond the norms was something I wanted to test.

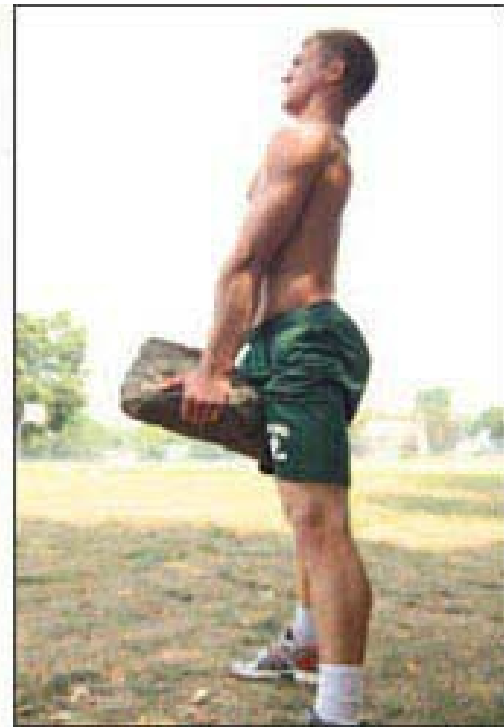
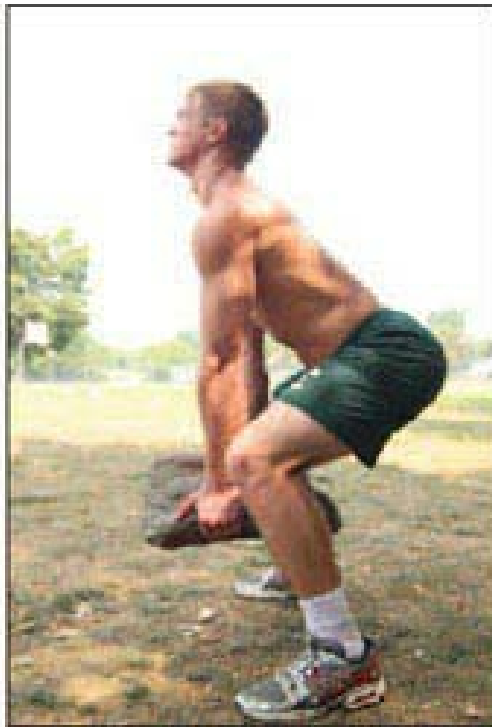
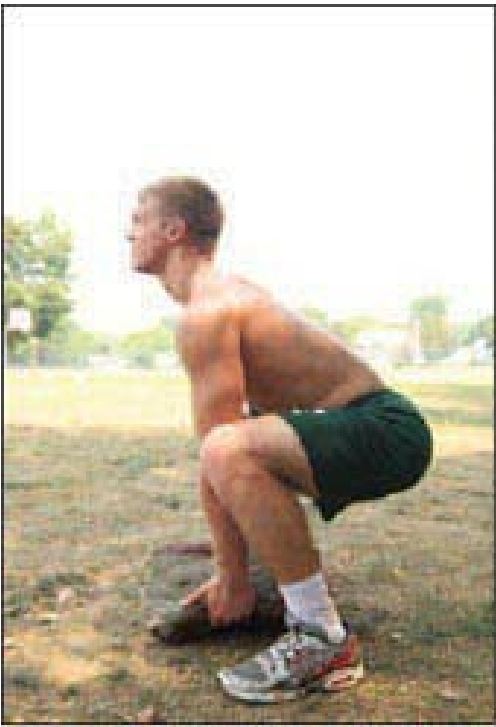
STONE DEADLIFT

As basic as it gets, yet it is crucial to learn and understand how to perform this exercise properly. Tense your entire body, push your hips back, and keep your chest tall.

Your lower back must remain flat; avoid round backing your lower back.

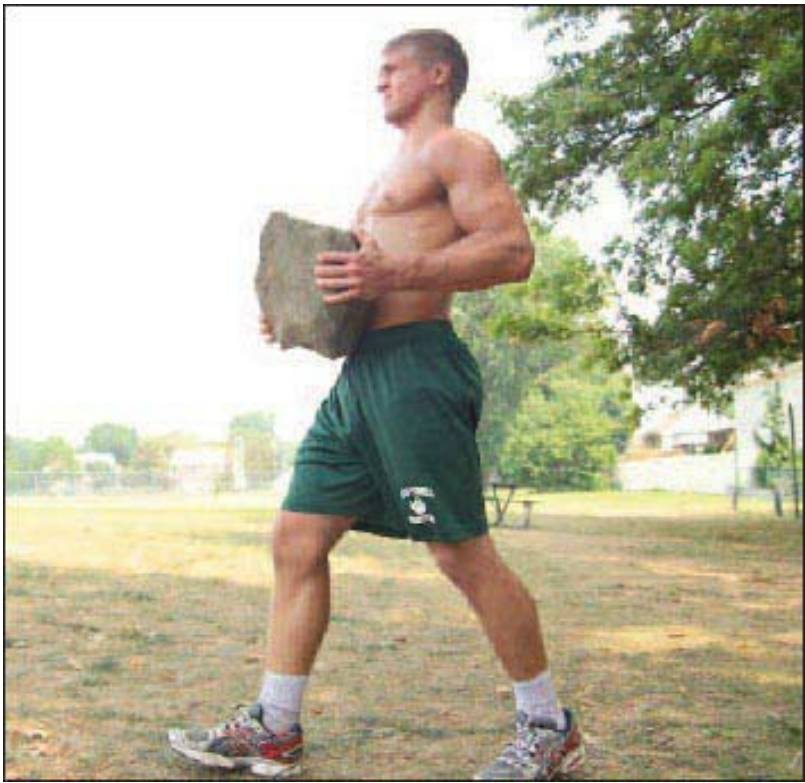


Stand tall at the top of each rep and return the stone to the ground under control. Do not drop the stone to ensure it doesn't land on your feet. Best technique is to always control the stone on the up and down phase. If you can't control the stone on the way down, you need to find a lighter stone AND get stronger.



STONE CARRY

After deadlifting the stone, try carrying the stone for distance. Start with 50 ft and progress to 100, 150, and even 200 ft without putting the stone down.

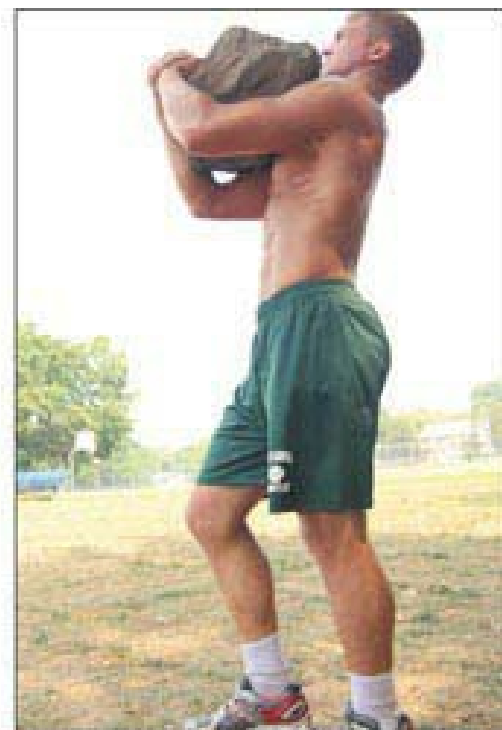
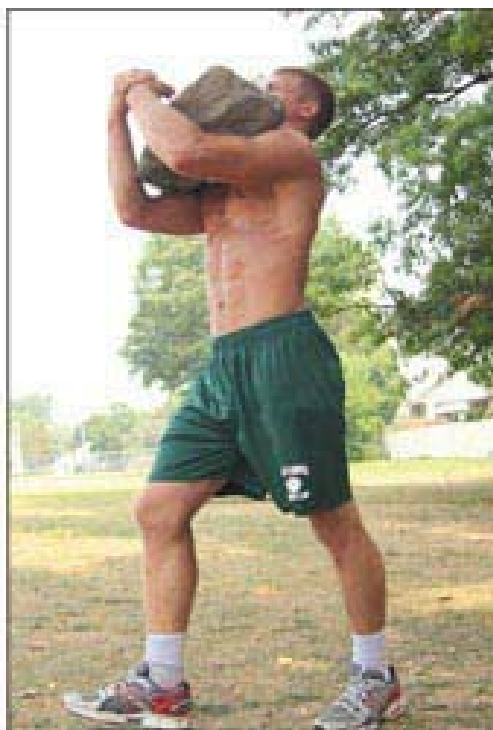
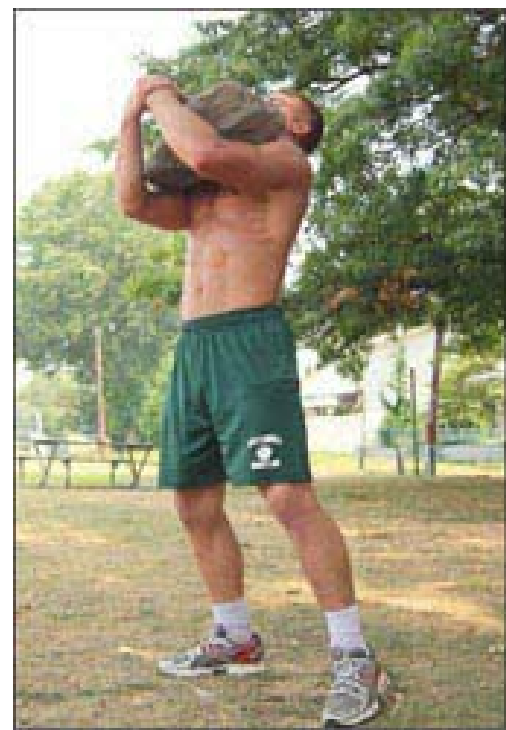


STONE ZERCHER CARRY

Just like the sandbag Zercher carry, you can use this double underhook position to carry stones. If needed, use a sweatshirt to avoid cutting up your forearms.

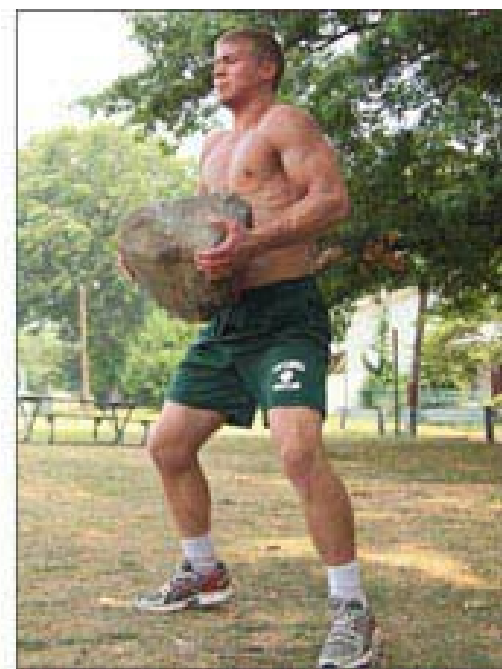
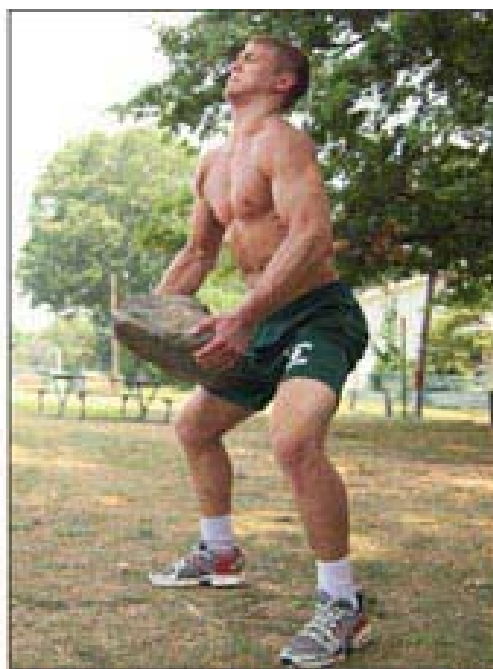
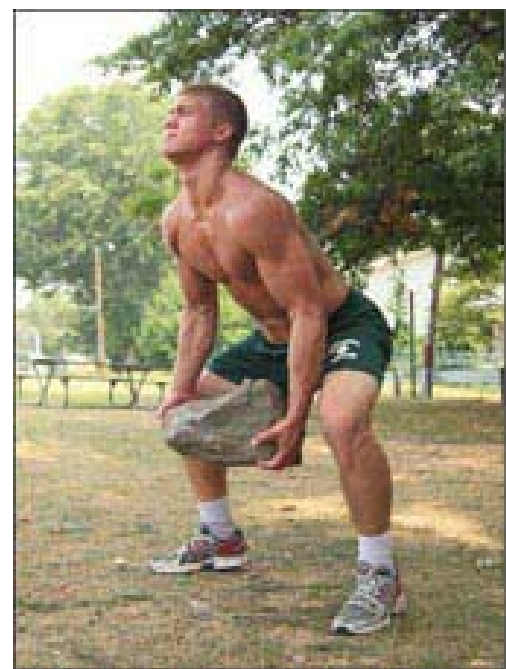
Keep your hands up around shoulder level with an upright posture. Avoid leaning back

and dropping your hands. If you can't hold the stone up high, then it's too heavy for you. Be smart and be safe.



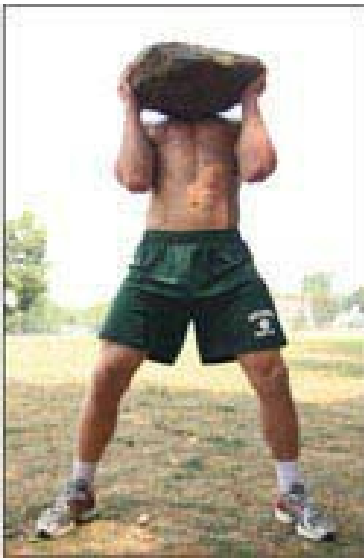
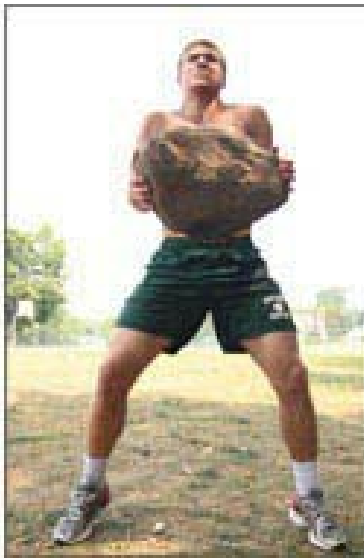
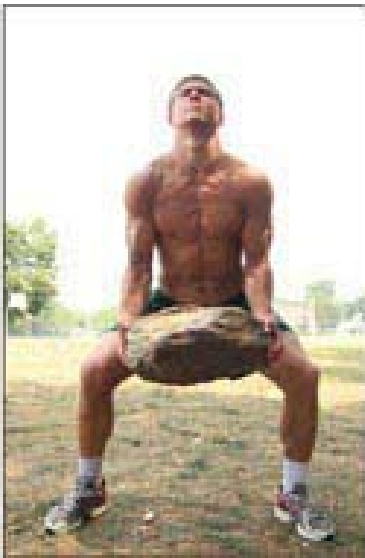
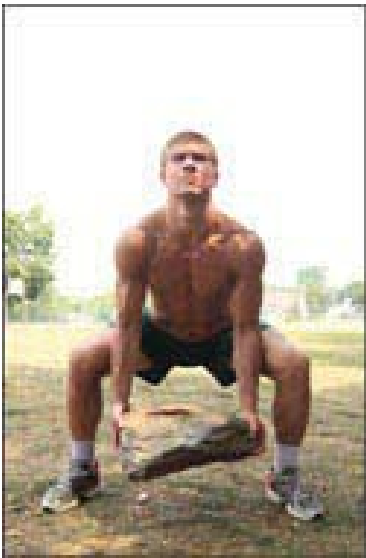
STONE CLEAN

Just like the sandbag, the stone can be cleaned if you have the skill dialed in with the sandbag first & foremost. Begin as you would a deadlift.



Pull the elbows high, and then flip the hands from pointing down to up.

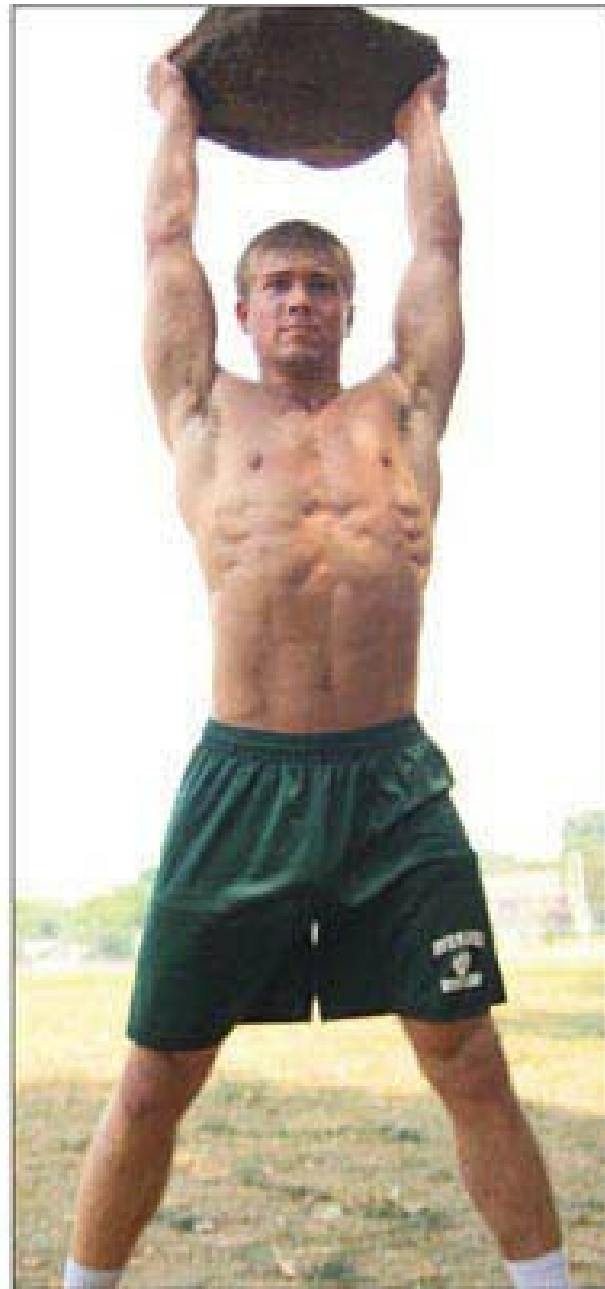
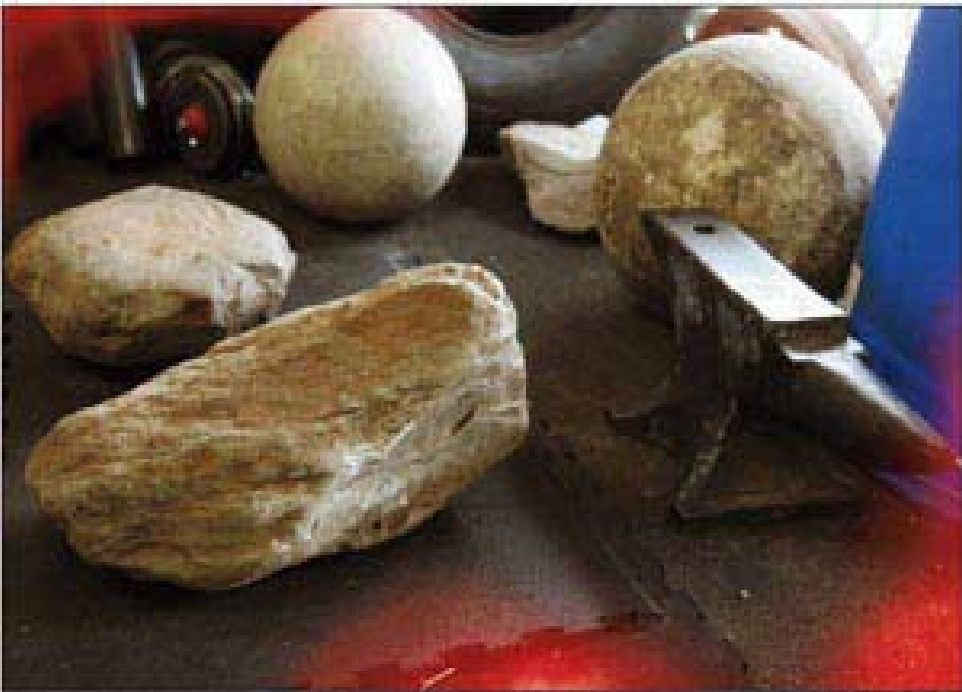
Watch your face and catch the stone in the rack position.



STONE PRESS

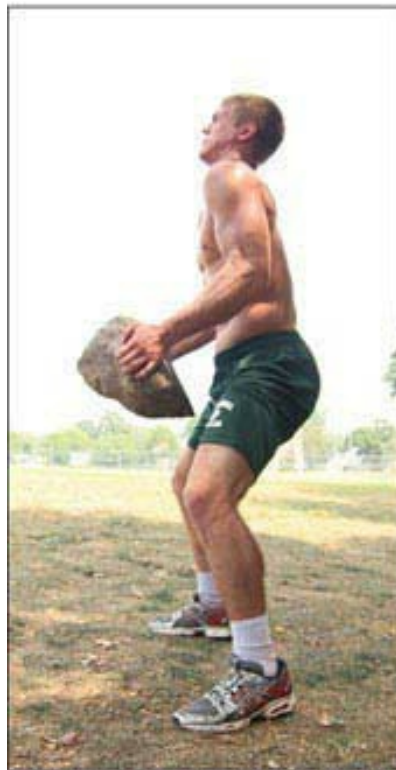
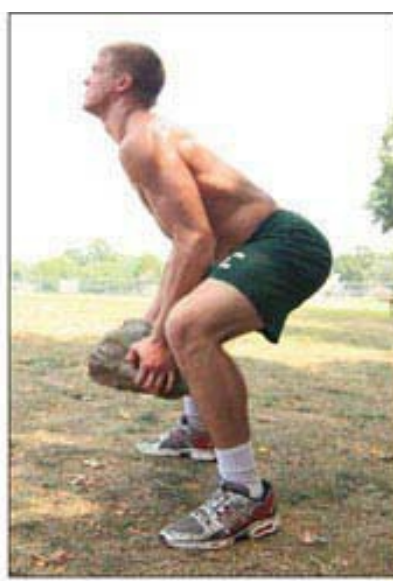
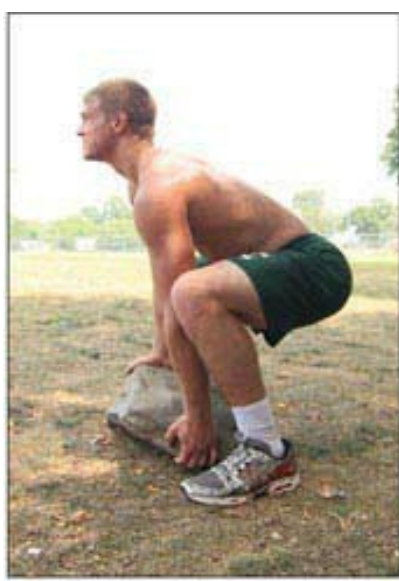
Before you press the stone, you must be able to clean the stone first. Once you have the stone in the rack position, tilt your head back and tense your entire body.

Press the stone overhead and lock the stone overhead for a two-count. Lower the stone back to the rack position slowly and under control.



STONE CLEAN AND PRESS

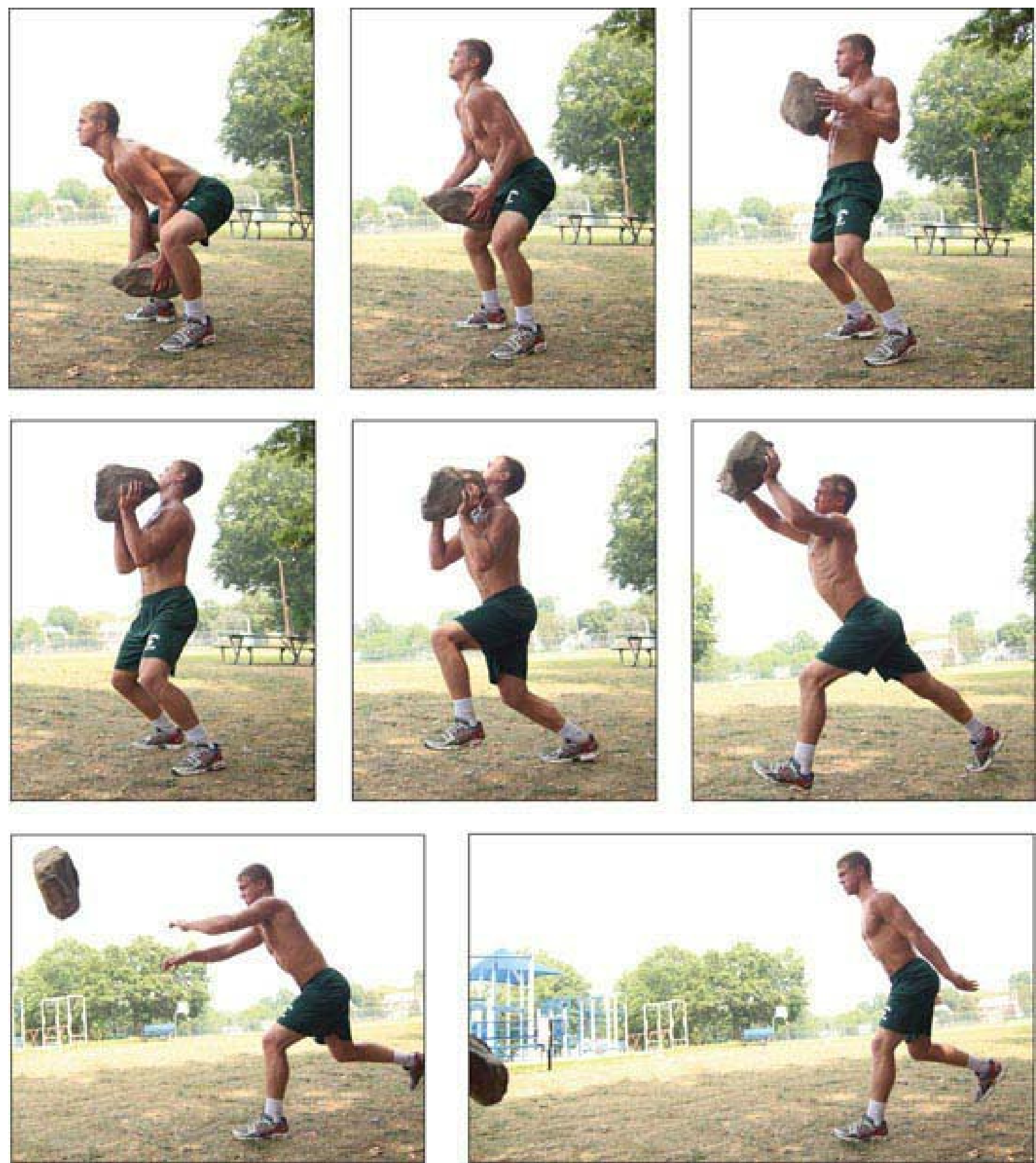
Once you are confident and skilled in the stone clean and the stone press, combine the 2 for the clean and press.



STONE CLEAN AND THROW

Perform the clean as described in the book. Step forward and throw the stone as far as possible. Make sure you push with both arms equally.

To ensure balance, change the foot that steps forward when throwing the stone on every other rep . You can use a lighter stone for power development. These are great on the sand or in an open field. Jog up and repeat for prescribed reps or time.



Stone training doesn't need to get fancy. The basics will always win. The use of the stone will challenge you as other odd objects challenge you in both a physical and mental sense.

There are countries around the world that have used stones for training for centuries. Some of them even have stone lifting as a national sport. These men understand and

respect what being strong is all about. Nowadays, not enough people respect what it truly takes to get strong.

Finding stones isn't as hard as many people think. I have found my stones in backyards, playgrounds, parks, on the beach, etc. Training outdoors in nature is beneficial for the mind and the body. To train outdoors without the congestion and BS that happens in a commercial gym is a breath of fresh air to say the least.

The rules are removed and you can do whatever you want with grass or sand beneath your feet. Depending on where you live, you will need to search for stones. You can also make atlas stones with the stone molds sold online.

Just like sandbag training, I love using stones of various shapes and sizes. The variations change the effect of the exercise and develop the body from various angles. When you get accustomed to training a certain way or training with the same tools your body will stop growing stronger. The human body loves to be lazy. It is the attitude you must bring to the table to push your body outside of its comfort zone.

An athlete who started following my training methods thanks to his high school football coach met up with me 10 years after his introduction to the world of Underground Strength.

In those 10 years, Matt "L Train" Leblanc went from football to the Marines and on to Strongman competitions. At 5'5" and a rock solid 175 lbs, Matt is built like a tank with shocking strength to boot. He said some very powerful words when met for the first time:



Stone Lifting Competition in Tahiti

"Champions and winners live outside their comfort zone, while losers never leave their comfort zone."

— Matt "L Train" Leblanc

This was after Matt entered our annual fundraiser, LIFT Strong for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Matt was the lightest competitor at 175 lbs, yet he tore through the 600-lb tire flip, ran with the 190-lb farmer handles, and ripped through the nearly 400-lb sled!

This quote from Matt or whomever he heard it from is spot on with regard to training. When your body gets accustomed to doing the weight or the same exercises, in the same order, your body will stop growing in strength.

Don't be "that guy" who complains and says you can't find a stone. Even living in NYC, you can go to a local park and find stones. Make do with what you have. Eliminate the petty excuses and be a hard charger.

STONE WORKOUTS

BEGINNER STONE WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Stone Deadlift 5 × 5
- 2) Stone Carry 5 × 100 ft

WORKOUT # 2

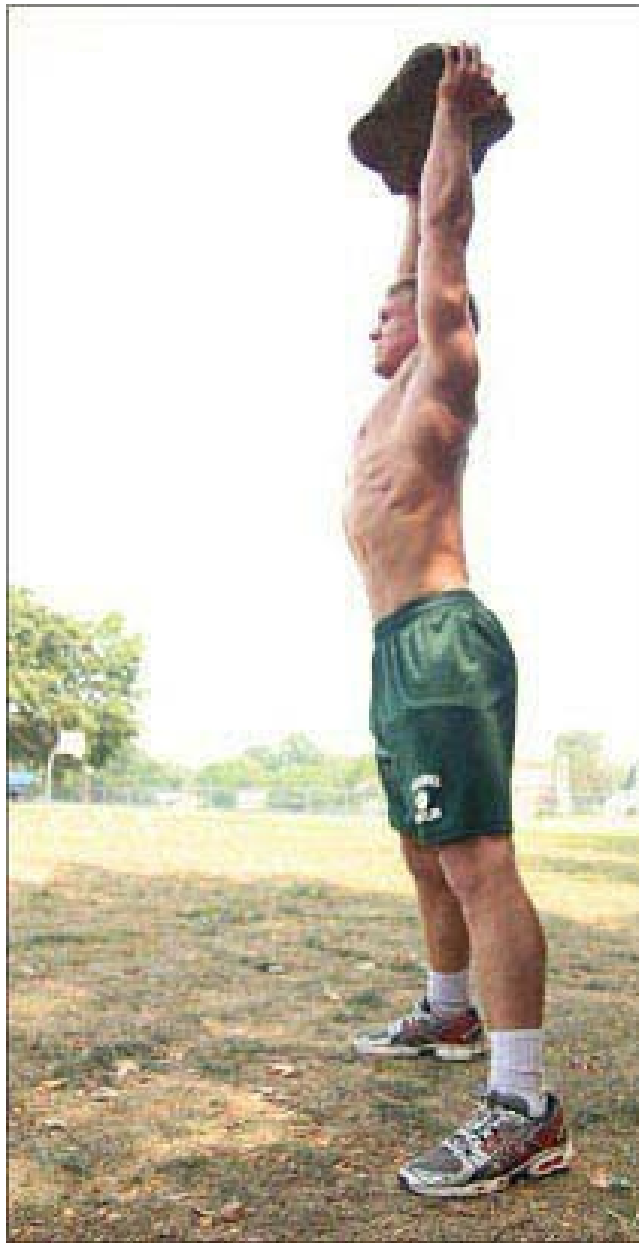
- 1) Stone Clean & Press 5 × 3
- 2) Stone Carry x Max Distance x 5 Minutes

WORKOUT # 3

5 Rounds of Below,
Rest 1 Minute Between Exercises

- A) Stone Carry x 100 ft
- B) Stone Clean & Press x 3 reps
- C) Stone Zercher Squats x 3 reps

INTERMEDIATE STONE WORKOUTS:



WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Stone Clean & Press x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 reps
- 2) Stone Squats x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
- 3) Stone Clean & Press Throw x 5 Minutes x Max Reps

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Stone Bent Over Row 5 x 5
- 2) Stone Deadlift x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
- 3) Stone Carry Medley x 1 set Arrange 5 stones of various shapes & sizes. Place all 5 stones on a starting line and place a cone 100 ft away for the finish line. Carry one stone to the finish line, sprint back, pick up another stone, and repeat until all 5 stones have been carried to the finish line.

WORKOUT # 3

- 1) **Stone Loading 5 × 3 - 5 stones** Load the stones just as you loaded the sandbag onto a picnic table. Any loadable platform can work. I've seen lifters build platforms from wood. Get 3 - 5 differently shaped stones and place them near your loading area. Lift each stone onto the platform as fast as possible. Rest 2 minutes and repeat for 5 rounds.

ADVANCED STONE AND BODYWEIGHT WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) **Carry & Load 5 × 3 - 5 stones** at 50 ft distance from loading platform Just like the loading exercises described earlier, you will now place the stones 50 ft away from the loading area. This will combine running, carrying, and finally, loading the stones on the platform. After you load all the stones, repeat for 5 rounds.
Note: Bring a wheel barrow or makeshift sled, allowing you to load the wheelbarrow or sled with the stones so you can bring them back to the starting line.
- 2A) Pushups 5 × 20 reps 2B) Stone bent Over Row 5 × 5

WORKOUT # 2

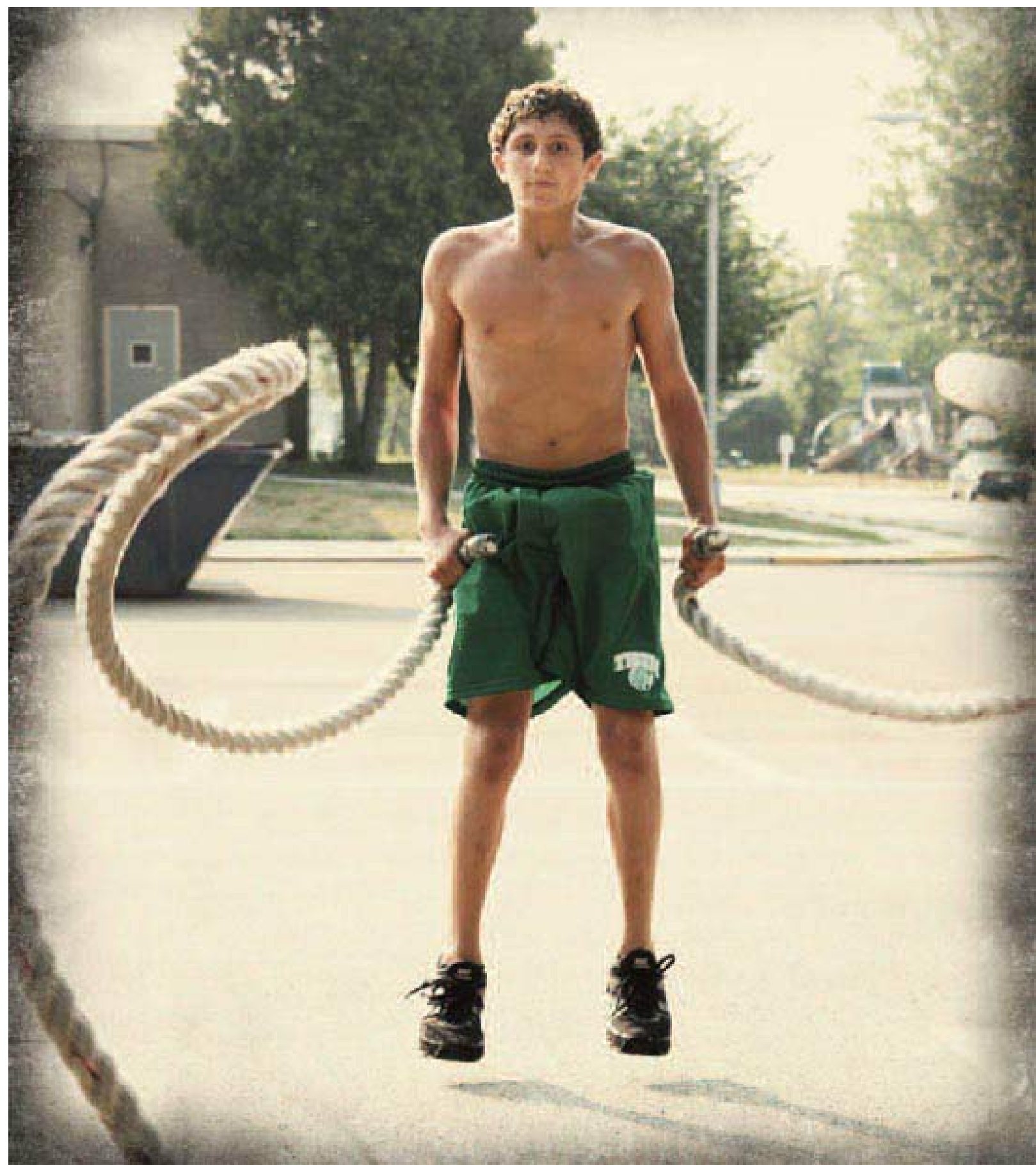
- 1A) Stone Clean & Press 5 × 3
- 1B) Mixed Grip Pull Ups (Add Weight) 5 × 3 - 6 reps
- 2) **Stone Zig Zag Carry Medley: 2 × 3 - 5 stones**
Arrange cones or obstacles in a zig zag line. Carry the stone around the obstacles, sprint back and repeat until all stones are at finish line. Repeat for 2 rounds.
- 3) Walking Bodyweight Lunges x 60 reps each leg AFAP
- 4) Hill or Stair Sprints x 10 Reps. Rest 60 seconds after each hill / stair sprint. Sprint duration should last approx. 30 seconds.

WORKOUT # 3

- 1) Stone Carry x 400 Meters AFAP
- 2) Pullups x 25 Total AFAP
- 3) Pushups x 50 Total AFAP
- 4) Squats x 75 Total AFAP
- 5) Walking Lunges x 50 ea. leg AFAP
- 6) Stone Clean & Press Throw x 6 Minutes x Max Work

One thing you'll hopefully notice is that there are no fancy exercises with stones. Training with odd objects, or any object for that matter, is not to be done with fancy, cool-looking exercises. Your primary aim is to get stronger, more explosive, and better conditioned. The exercises are basic. You will carry, squat, press, row, and throw.

Being fancy for the sake of being fancy offers no benefit. If I see a sandbag, it is the same focus. Stick to the basics. Results are what count. Don't ever forget that.



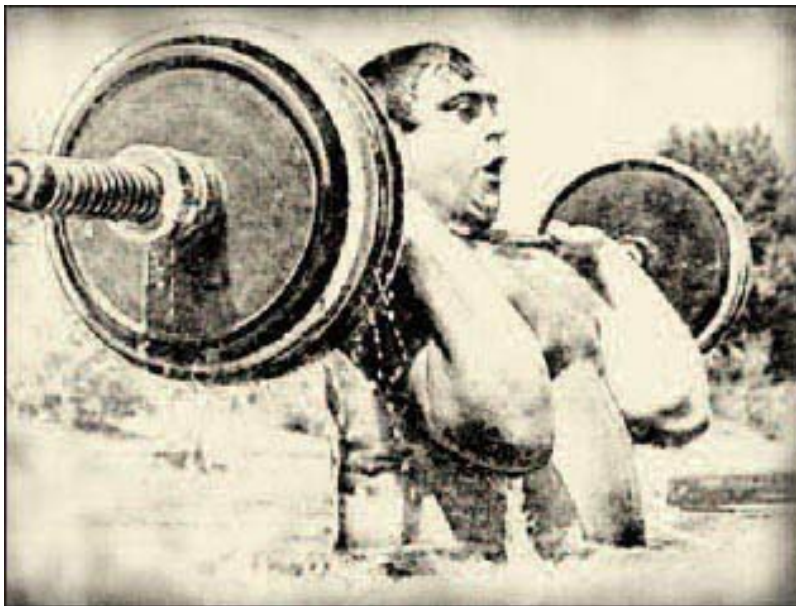
TRAINING OUTDOORS

Training outdoors is not only a raw and natural form of training, but also a way for you to clear your mind and remove yourself from the constant distractions found in a commercial gym or home gym.

When you begin training outdoors, you begin to eliminate the so-called “rules” of lifting, and begin listening to your animal instincts. You become what I call a “soul lifter,” who stops discriminating against this style of training vs. another style. Instead, you see everything as training, and respect the many ways you can develop a stronger mind, body, & spirit.

I’ve had so many experiences that motivated me to push my training to the outdoors at least once a week. Of course, my first ever inspiration was Arnold’s discussion about breaking the rules of training, loading up his car with a barbell and 250 lbs of weights. Arnold and his buddy squatted 50 sets or more until they could no longer stand, let alone walk. They ended their night grilling meat over fire, drinking wine, and partying with their girlfriends.

I interviewed Juan Carlos Santana and he told me that in the 70s, his martial arts instructor had them throwing stones up and down the beach for distances of over a mile.



Vasily Alexeev

I had seen photos and read about Vasily Alexeev, one of the strongest men who ever lived, walking through knee high water for several hours to strengthen his hips, performing Olympic weightlifting exercises with his barbell while waist deep in water, and throwing the barbell during the snatch for high reps. The stories of men breaking rules and

dominating their competition resonated with me big time and they should with you as well. Success leaves clues.

Truck Pushing

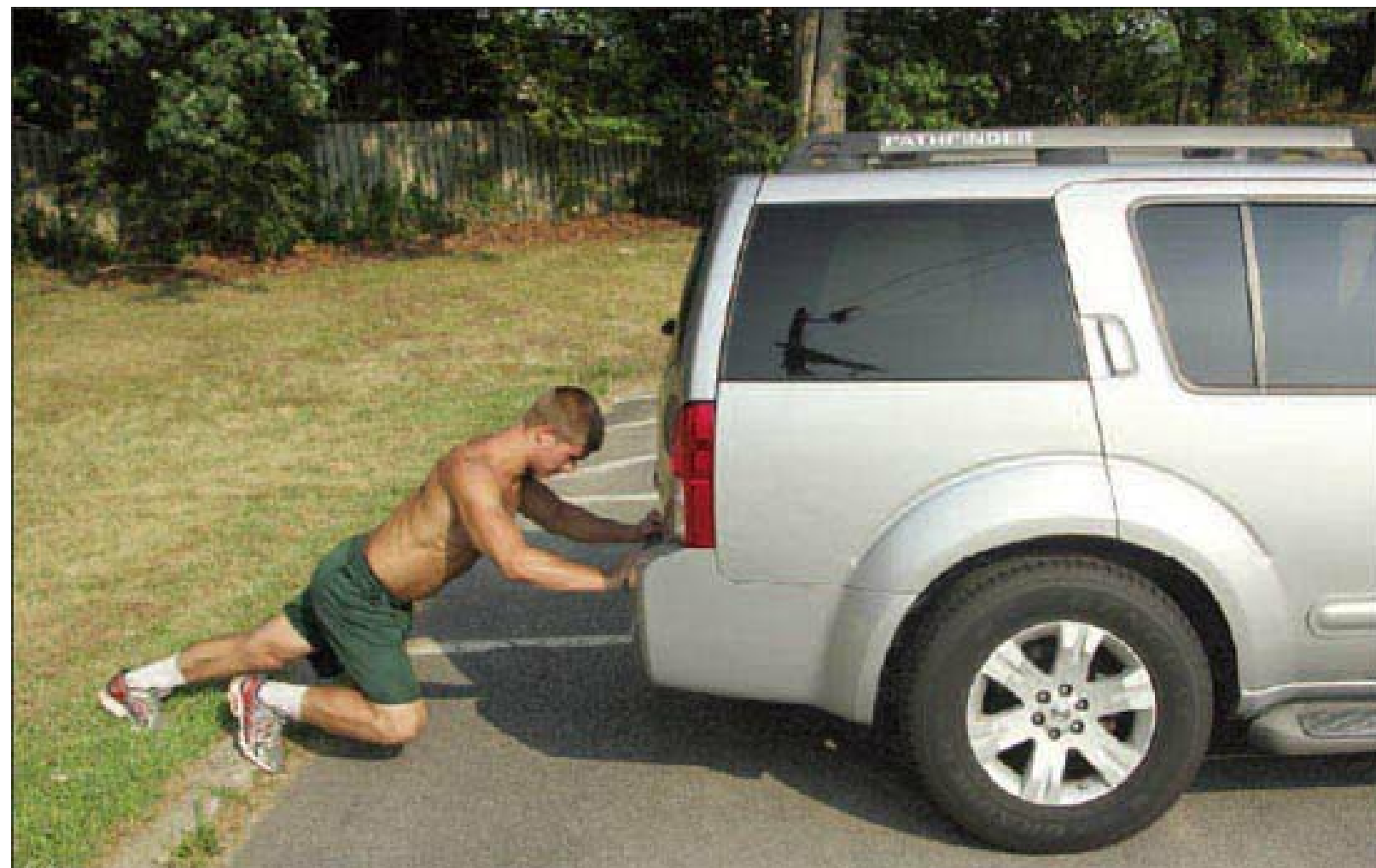
Before I had ever heard about sled dragging or the prowler was invented, I had memories of watching the World's Strongest Man contest when I was a kid. Back then, WSM was aired on TV. I watched in awe as men flipped cars over, walked with cars attached to a shoulder harness, pushed and pull cars, buses, and even trains!

Again, success leaves clues. I was in elementary school and would never miss an episode of The Incredible Hulk back when big Lou Ferrigno was built like a Mack truck, and green quickly became my favorite color.

I began driving behind auto garages or found parking lots after hours, and would push my truck around. My legs, shoulders, and back got one helluva workout, especially if the pavement was slightly inclined.

When pushing a car or truck, lock your arms out and tense your abs. A mistake many make is allowing their backs to round over and their abs to relax while pushing a car or truck. Keep everything tight!

Use commonsense safety precautions when training outdoors. Make sure the ground isn't slippery or covered in gravel. Your footwear should be durable to ensure foot safety.



How many trips and what distance works best for truck pushing?

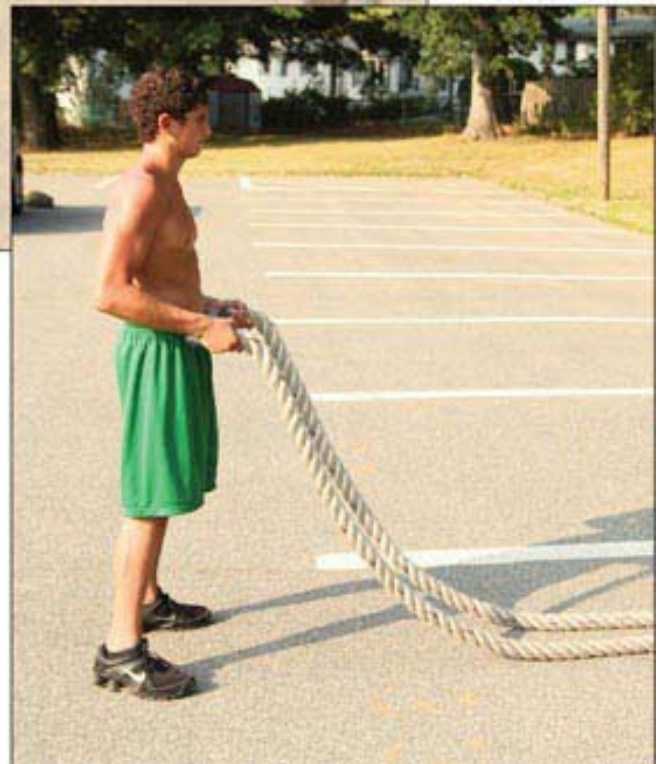
- I prefer to look at technique when deciding on sets/reps for something like the truck push. If your technique feels like it's going to slip and go downhill, STOP. Don't push yourself to the brink of injury. Leave a little in the tank and come back stronger the next time.*
- The distance of the truck push can be anywhere from 50 ft to 150 ft.*
- If the truck is heavy, you can have 2 people pushing at the same time, just make sure you're both doing your fair share of the work and pushing at maximum strength.*
- You can push your truck in the beginning or at the end of your workout. If you perform this movement first, perform a thorough warm-up to properly prepare your legs, ankles, feet, and entire body.*
- I have pushed trucks in groups of 3 across long parking lots. Every 5 - 10 seconds I would yell switch and the pusher would immediately run to the end of the line. It was a great way to keep everyone involved while performing lots of explosive work.*



Battling Ropes

I first came across battling ropes through John Brookfield. My friend Jason C Brown had purchased a 50 ft rope from the marina in Philadelphia and he challenged anyone at our seminar to perform slams for 1 minute non stop.

Only a handful of the 40 participants made it past the 30-second mark, let alone a full minute. I tried the ropes myself and felt their effect immediately. As John describes the ropes, they require power and speed endurance because the ropes require high velocity and high intensity if the ropes are to continue moving.



Battling Rope grip 1 (thumbs away).

I've also found ropes to help with shoulder health and mobility. You can move side to side, forward and backward, and of course your arm motions can and should change to hit

the muscles from different angles.

The standard rope is 1.5", but for hard chargers who want an extra challenge you can and should go with a 2" rope. Check out the 2 different ways you can grip the battling ropes below. You can also fold the end of the rope to create a very thick grip if the 1.5" rope isn't challenging you enough.

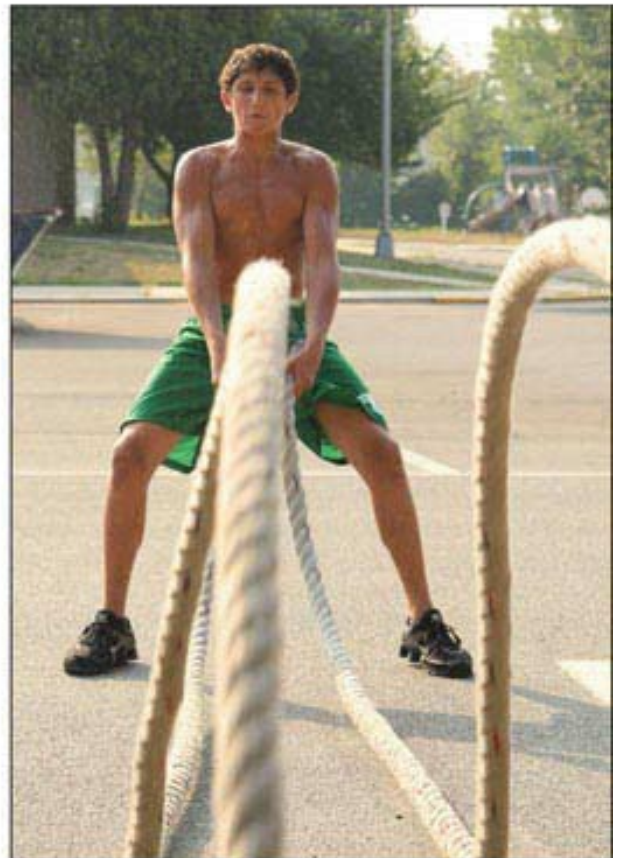
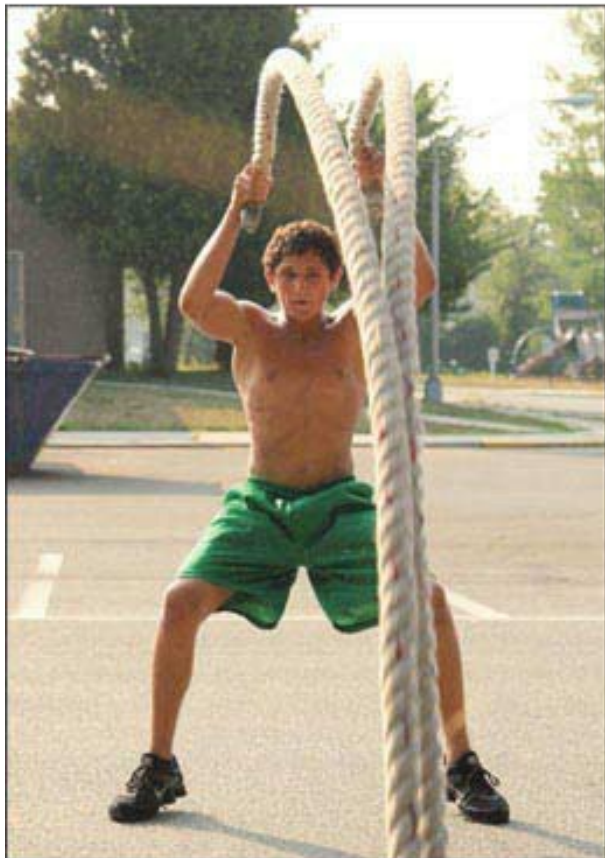
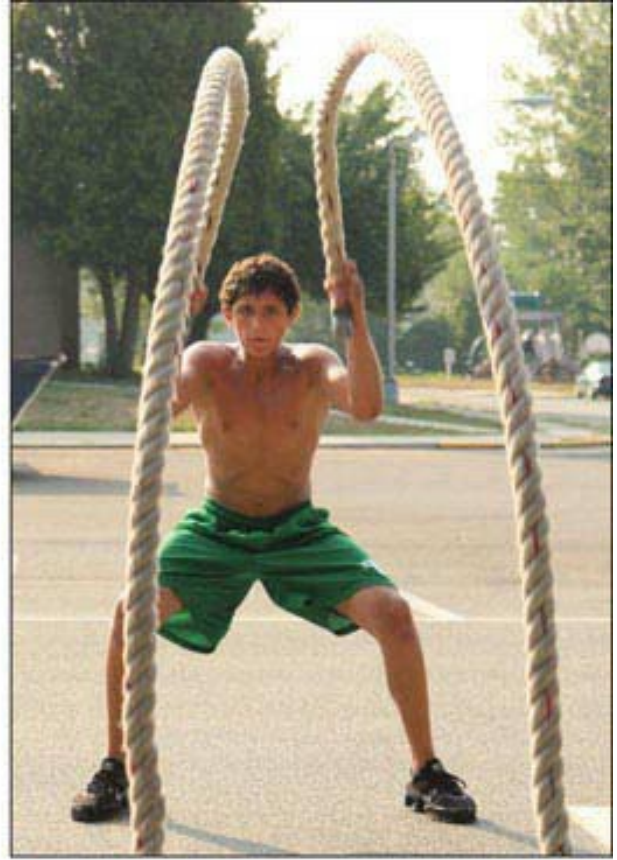


Battling Rope grip 2 (thumbs towards you).

BATTLING ROPE SLAMS

When holding the battling ropes, do not stretch the ropes all the way back. When you do this, the ropes will be off the ground and thus you will not feel the weight of the rope.

Instead, hold your arms at a 90 degree angle with hands around waist level. This way, only the first few feet of the rope are off the ground, the rest is on the ground which adds weight to the rope, challenging you appropriately.



Perform this exercises with 2 foot stances: You can take a wider foot stance and keep

your arms waving up and down between your legs, or you can take a closer stance and wave your arms outside your legs.

You can also stagger your stance, as you would in a lunge position. Hit a few reps and then perform a lunge jump to switch the front leg. We've done this in a more advanced manner by performing lunge jumps AND slams on every rep.

And last but not least, you can shuffle side to side while slamming the ropes, as well as forward and backward in a walking fashion. Try them all, test them all, mix it up, and see what works best for you.



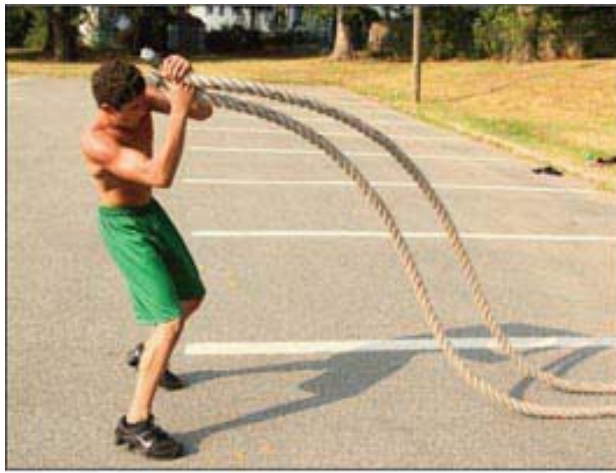
BATTLING ROPE ALTERNATE SLAMS

Alternate arm motions is very similar to what it looks like when someone is playing the drums. The ropes will not slam as high as the double arm motion; these alternate waves will be smaller and shorter arm motions. These are very challenging on the arms and shoulders.



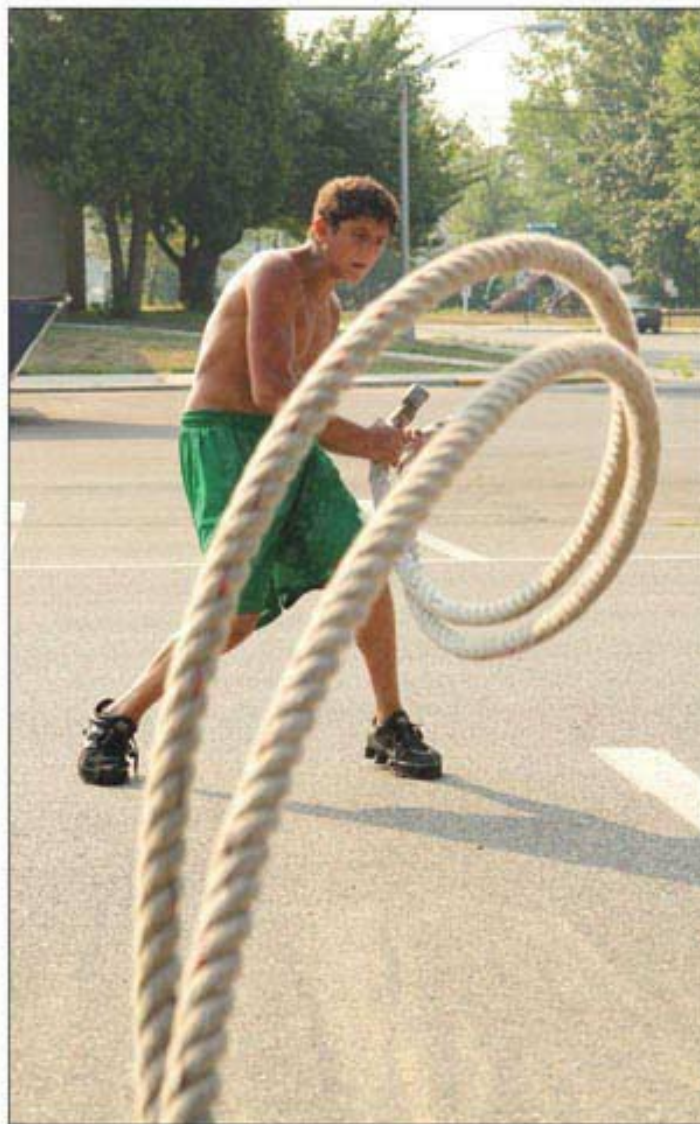
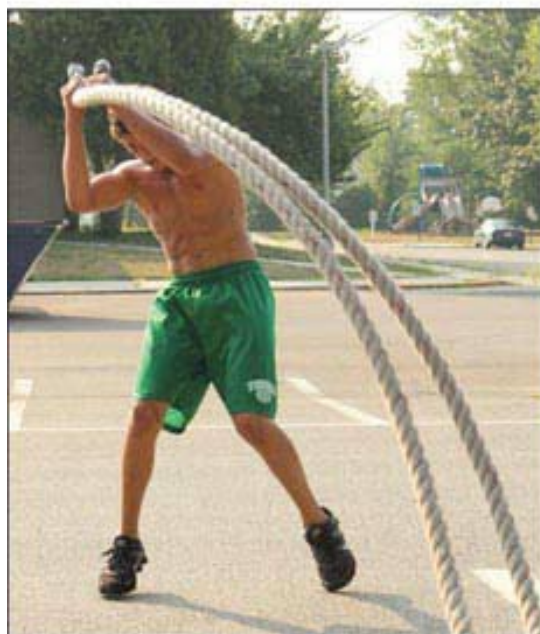
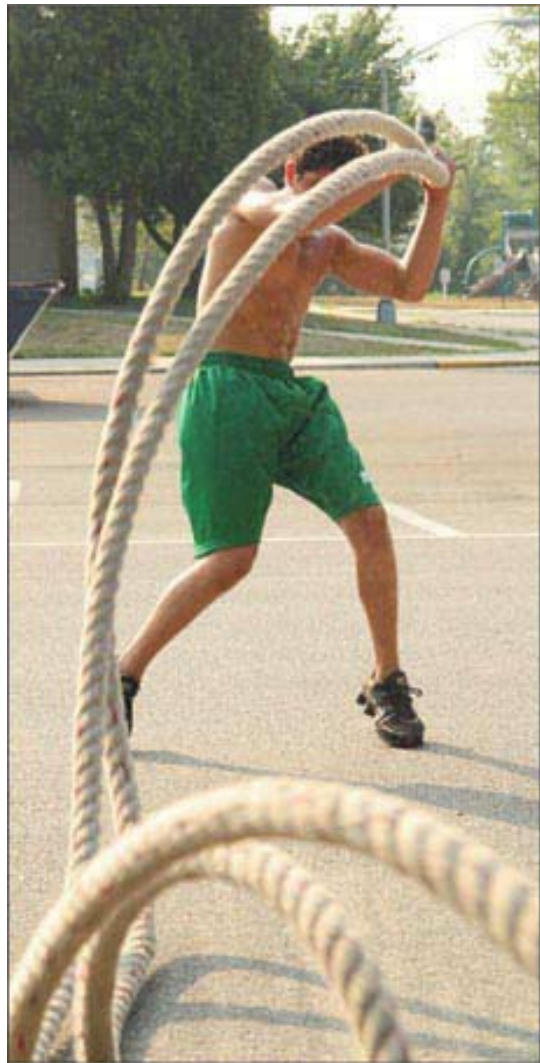
BATTLING ROPE ROTATIONS

This drill is based upon the throwing motion our wrestlers used during hip tosses. It is great not only for developing power through the hips and the torso, but also for developing athleticism.



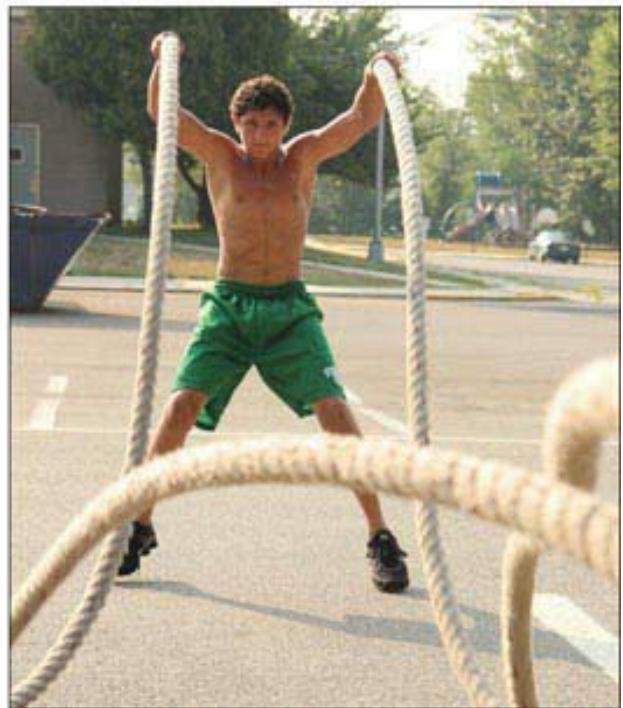
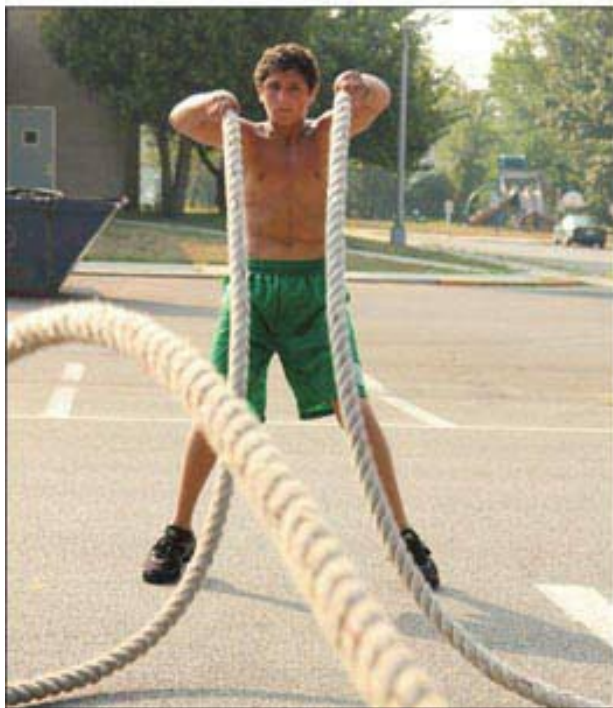
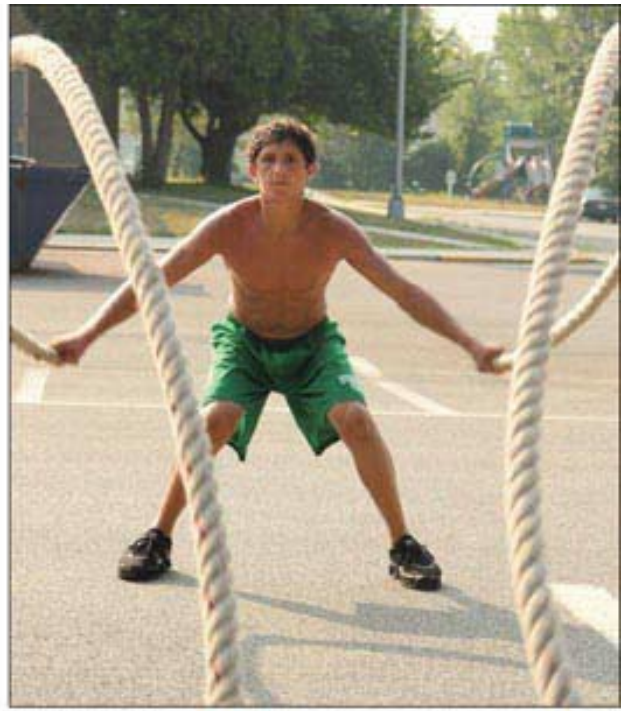
BATTLING ROPE ROTATIONS (CONTINUED)

This drill requires the athlete to rotate from the balls of the feet to the hips and the torso. If they are flat-footed or moving robotically you know that this athlete needs to improve their coordination and athleticism. I like to explain this drill by telling the athlete to rotate and throw the rope up and over, as if you are pretending to move the rope over an obstacle.



BATTLING ROPE CIRCLES

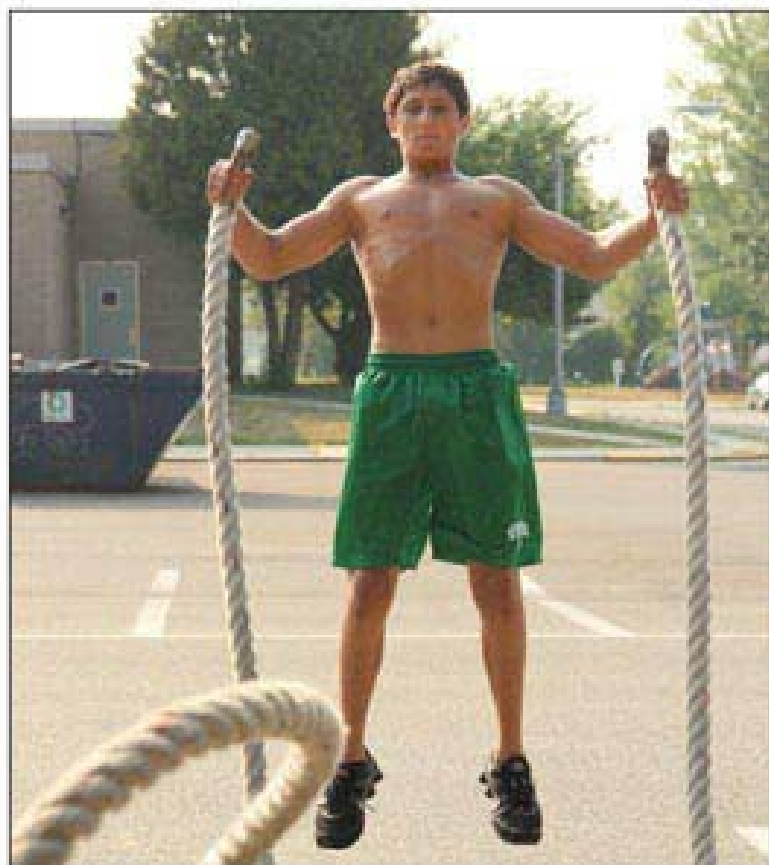
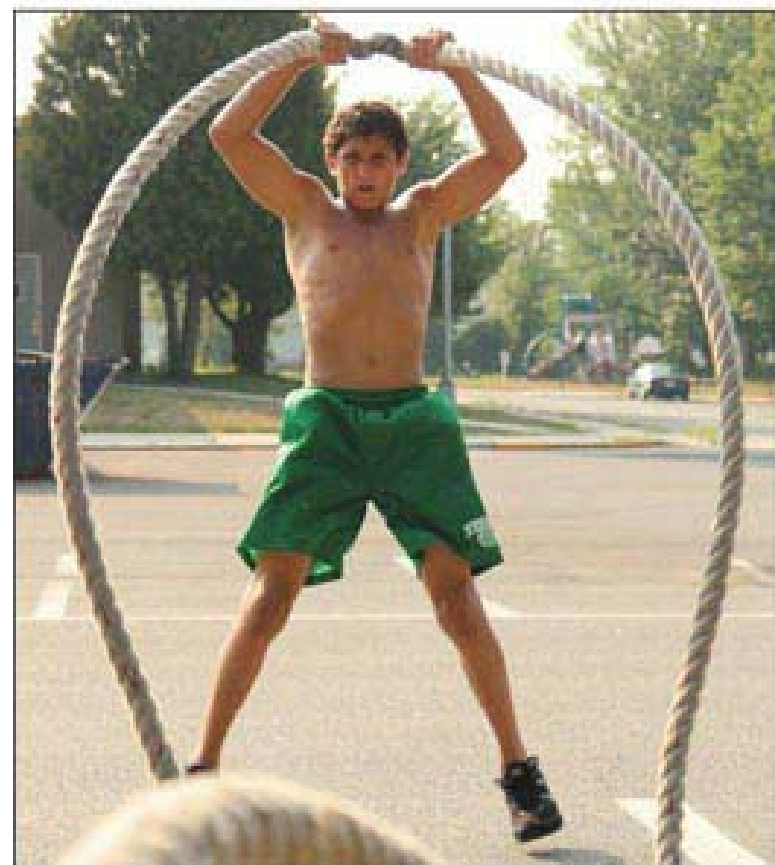
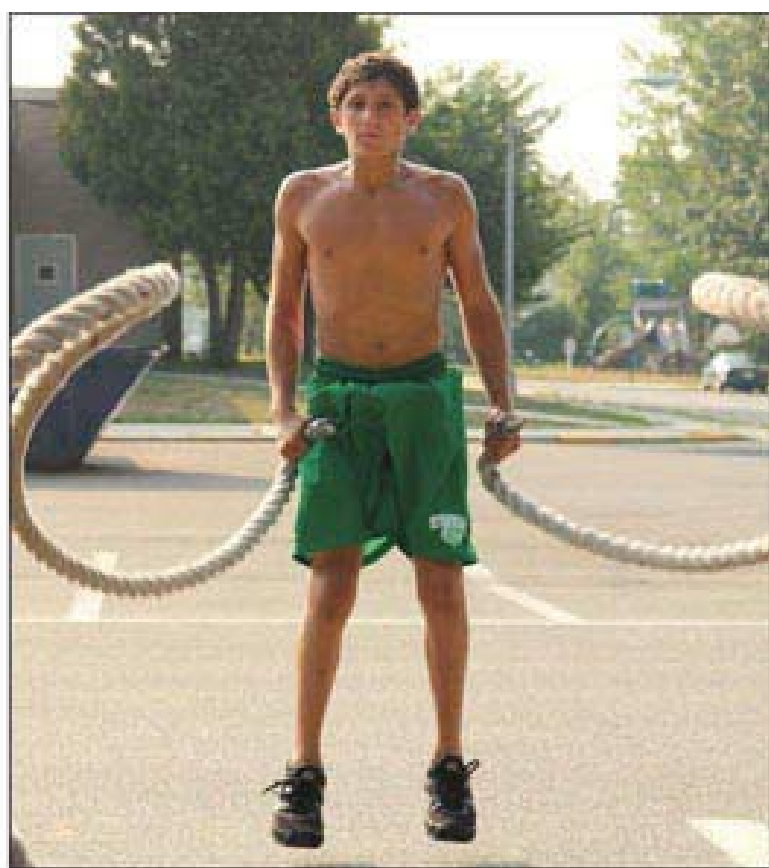
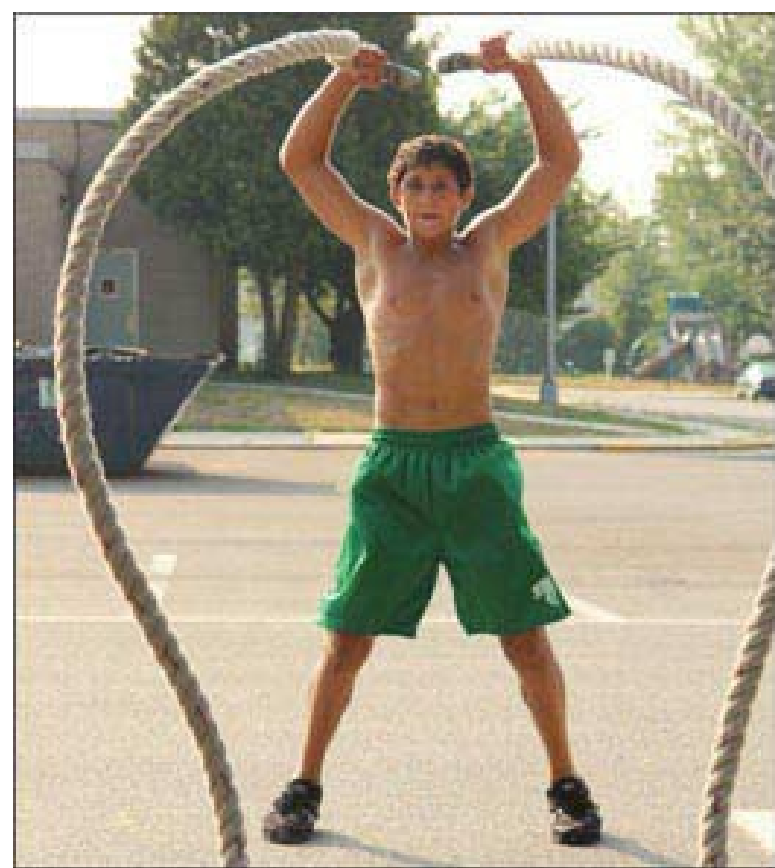
This is an awesome drill to help your shoulders stay healthy while developing shoulder endurance. Try these standing in one spot, as well as walking forward and backward while performing large circles with your arms and the ropes.



BATTLING ROPES JUMPING JACKS

Jumping jacks will now be intensified as you must lift your arms up and overhead. Make sure your hands touch at the top. The ropes should be in line with your torso. You will likely have to move forward so the rope has more slack and you have enough slack to lift the ropes overhead.

Note: As mentioned earlier, we also use lateral motions, lunge jumps, reverse lunges, lying in plank, one-arm pushup positions, etc. when using the battling ropes. I encourage all to test the variations and see what works best. Training requires experimentation on yourself and others to truly feel what works and what doesn't work.



OUTDOOR WORKOUTS

W

When I look back to the days of when I began regularly training outdoors I remember having to take a LOT of breaks, sitting on the park benches to recover from the brutal circuits.

I'm going to list various circuits and workouts for you to implement below. The way that always worked great for me and my training partner was packing up the back of my SUV with the following training tools:

- ✓ Sled or prowler
- ✓ Sandbag
- ✓ 2 Kettlebells
(1 medium & 1 heavy kettlebell)

The best playgrounds were always at the elementary schools. Maybe you're lucky enough to find a park with pullup bars and parallel bars but in my neck of the woods, unfortunately, great playgrounds are far and few between.



I always looked for high monkey bars or pullup bars and parallel bars. In the days of physical culture and gymnastics, these bars were cornerstones of any fitness routine, and were almost always found in Turner Halls in the mid 1900s.

If you don't have kettlebells, go ahead and bring a dumbbell or two. Some other additions would be to bring a tire for sled drags or for throwing.

No rules apply here, except that you need to get outdoors and train hard in the fresh air.

BEGINNER OUTDOOR WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Truck / Car Push 3 × 100 ft
- 2A) Hand Walk on Parallel Bars 4 x
- 2B) Pullups 4 x Submax reps
- 2C) KB Farmer Walks 4 × 100 ft

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Sandbag Shoulder & Carry x 50 ft, drop bag, shoulder to opposite shoulder, carry back x 50 ft: 4 rounds
- 2) Parallel Bar Hand Walk + Dips x 5 reps at End of Bars: 5 rounds
- 3) Sled Drags 5 × 200 ft

WORKOUT # 3

- 1A) Kettlebell Farmer Walks 5 × 100 ft
- 1B) Pullups 5 x Submax Reps
- 1C) Step Ups On Bench 5 × 10 / 10 Ea.
- 1D) Feet Elevated Push Ups 5 × 10
- 2) Truck Push 3 × 100 ft

INTERMEDIATE OUTDOOR WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1A) Dips 5 × 6 reps
- 1B) Dip Bar Leg Raises 5 × 6 reps
- 1C) Recline Rows On Parallel Bars 5 × 6 reps
- 2) SBag Clean & Throw Over Low Pullup Bars x 20 Reps Total
- 3) Sled Drags 5 × 100 ft

WORKOUT # 2

- 1A) Picnic Table Military Press 4 × 15 - 20 Reps

1B) Feet Elevated Push Ups 4 × 10 Reps

2A) Sandbag Zercher Squats x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps

2B) Pull Ups x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps

3A) Truck Push 4 × 100 ft

3B) Battle Ropes 4 × 50 reps

(Choose 2 exercises, 25 reps each)

WORKOUT # 3

1) Parallel Bar Hand Walk Forwards & Backwards 4 x

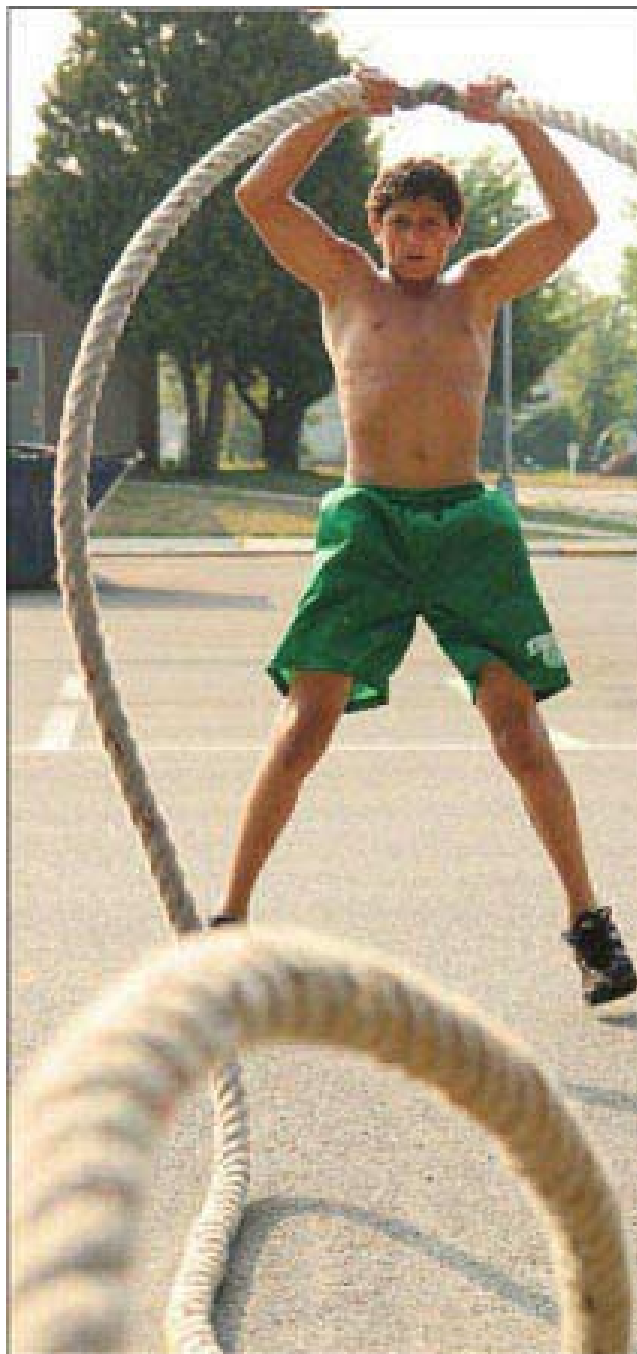
2A) Walking KB Lunges 3 × 6 / 6

2B) Pullups 3 x Submax Reps

2C) Jumps On Bench 3 × 10 Reps

2D) KB Farmer Walks 3 × 100 ft

ADVANCED OUTDOOR WORKOUTS:



WORKOUT # 1

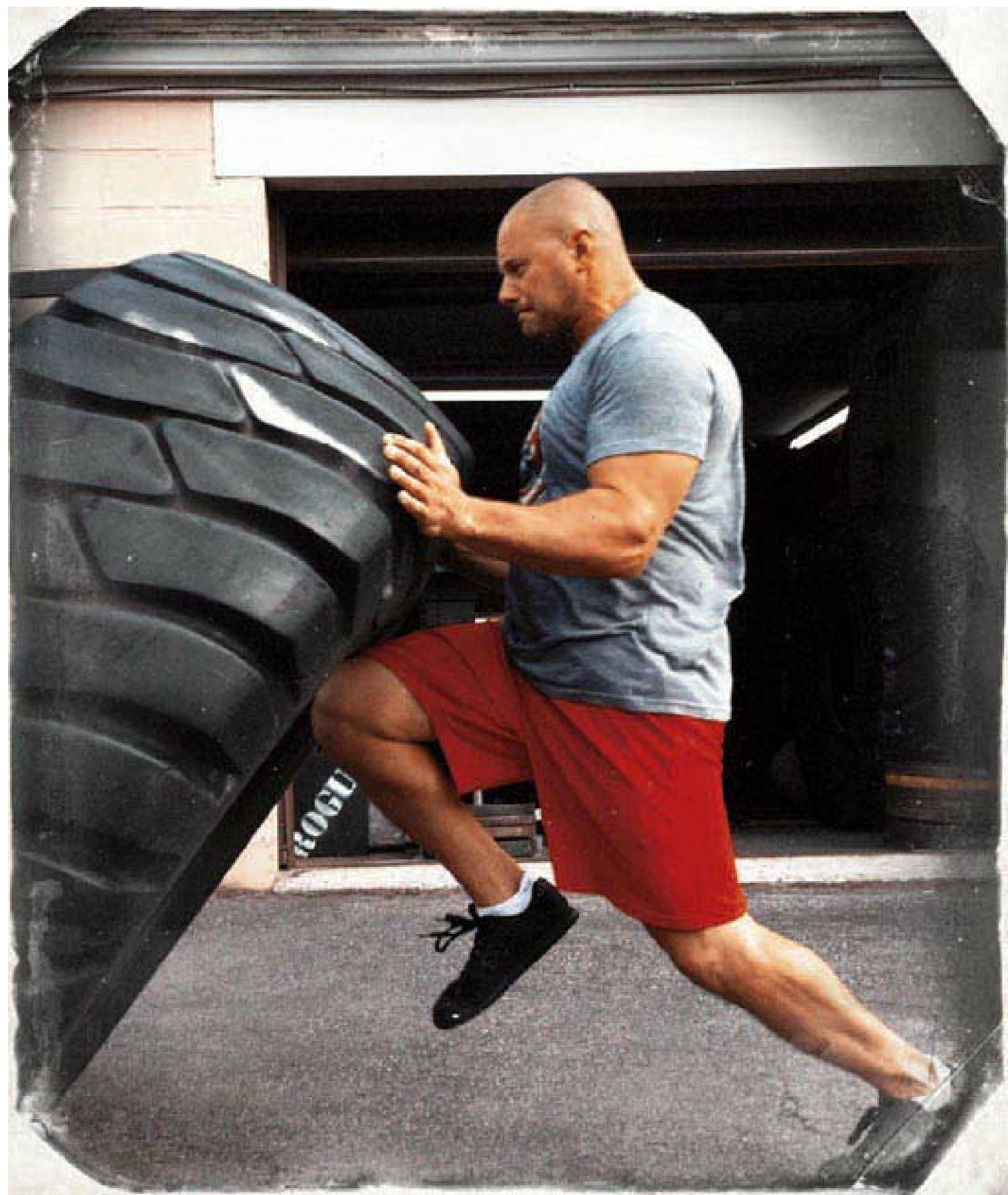
- 1) Run 1/4 Mile THEN 5 Rounds of :
 - 2A) Parallel Bar Hand Walk + 10 Dips
 - 2B) Pullups x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
 - 2C) Run x 200 meters
 - 2D) Recline Rows x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
 - 2E) Squat Jumps x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps
 - 2F) Lunge Jumps x 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Sandbag Carry x 1/4 Mile (Place Bag on back, shoulder & Zercher, mix positions throughout the carry)
- 2) Sled Sprints (Attach Sled to Weight Belt) 10 x 100 ft
- 3) Mixed Grip Pullups x 50 Total AFAP (Switch Grip Every Set)
- 4) Walking Lunges x 60 Reps Ea.
- 5) Sandbag Shouldering x 15 / 15 Ea. AFAP

WORKOUT # 3

- 1A) Sandbag Zercher Carry 5 x 100 ft
- 1B) Truck Push 5 x 100 ft
- 2A) Dips x 20, 15, 10, 5 reps
- 2B) Recline Rows x 20, 15, 10, 5 reps
- 3A) Sandbag Zercher Squats 4 x 6
- 3B) Sandbag On Back Walking Lunges 4 x 6 / 6 Ea.



TIRE TRAINING

The first place I flipped tires was at the tire yard in my hometown. Not every hometown has a tire yard, so search around for a tire yard near you. When my buddy and I showed up at the tire yard, we had **NO** clue about proper tire flip technique.

There was no such thing as YouTube, and I never came across an article on the Internet talking about tire flips. Remember, at this time of my life, "functional training" was the craze, and the definition of "functional training" back then was standing on wobble boards, using stability balls, etc.

We asked the guys operating the lift trucks to pull down a tire that they felt was a good weight. That tire was about **400 lbs**, and I damn near got crushed trying to flip that tire for one rep. My friend had an even worse time and it was embarrassing as these 2 workers watched us in amusement as they puffed away on their cigarettes.

I reluctantly asked for them to pull down a lighter tire for us and they obliged. After we tried and successfully survived a few reps of the tire flip, the 2 workers put out their cigarettes and flipped the tire for several reps with ease. **Emphasis on the word ease!**

My training partner and I were embarrassed. I looked at my friend and told him that we had been training the wrong way if those 2 guys just ran through those tractor tires after smoking a cigarette.

I knew we were missing the boat when it came to "functional strength," and it had nothing to do with lying on a stability ball or curling 20 lb dumbbells while standing on one foot.

That day was a serious wake up call for me. It was a moment where I began to understand the difference between show and go muscles. I wanted to have **GO** muscles for a change. I wanted to stop getting injured. I wanted to truly be stronger than others, not just look stronger.

For 3 or 4 days after my first tire flipping experience, my biceps and forearms were brutally sore, a sign that we did them wrong. As I'll explain below, there is **NO** curling when flipping tires, and on the flip side (no pun intended), you must have strong biceps when training with tires.

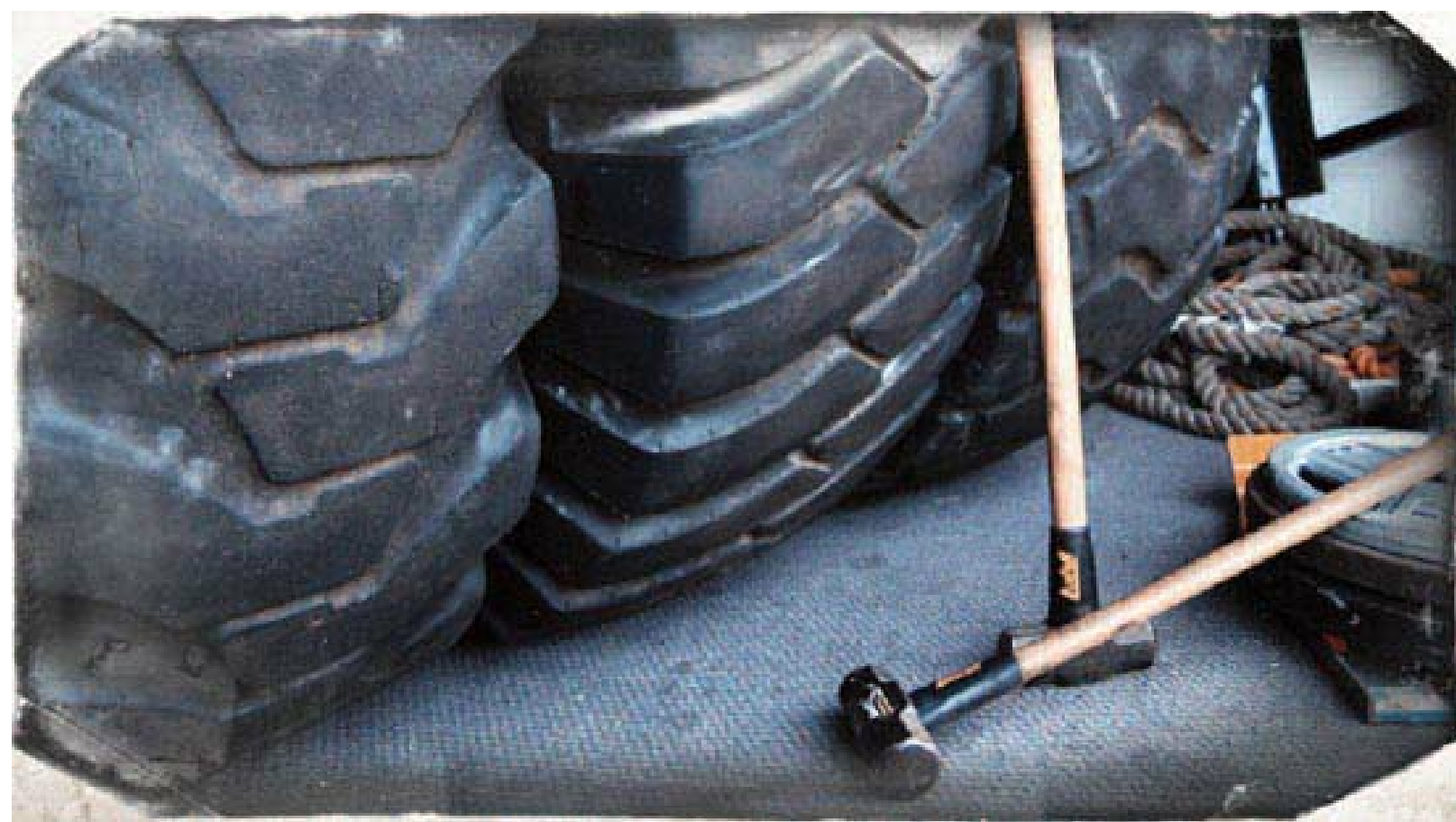
I was floored with the strength of Tony and the other guy working in the tire yard. I was so angry at my past injuries from training like a pretty boy bodybuilder that these guys gave me a rude wake-up call.

Tony's forearms and hands looked like weapons that could knock my head off if he threw a punch my way. I had heard about the hands being molded into stronger "weapons", especially if the grip was worked at an early age.

Tony had been working at the tire yard since age 14, half his life at the time. After years and years of grabbing, lifting, and throwing tires around, his hands and entire body had been molded into deadly weapons, regardless of how many cigarettes he smoked.

There are many variations of "strong." Some people are strong with their own bodyweights, while others are strong under a heavy bar, and others are strong when working with tires, cinder blocks, etc.

Your goal is to get strong. Period. Find a way to make it happen. This book might outline the countless tools and methods, but it is ultimately your drive, motivation, and desire to be strong that will lead you to great results.

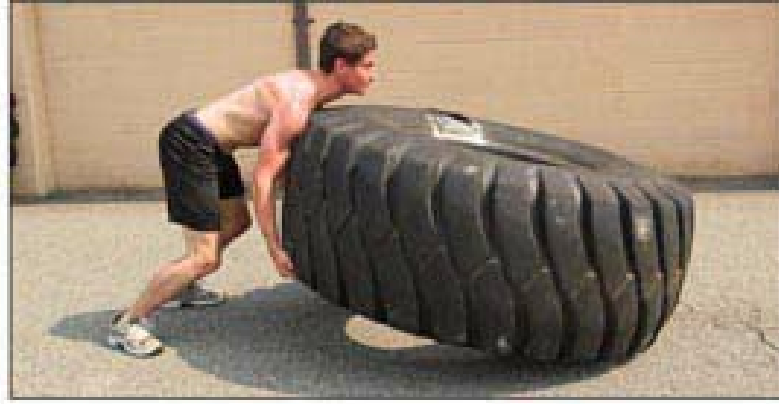
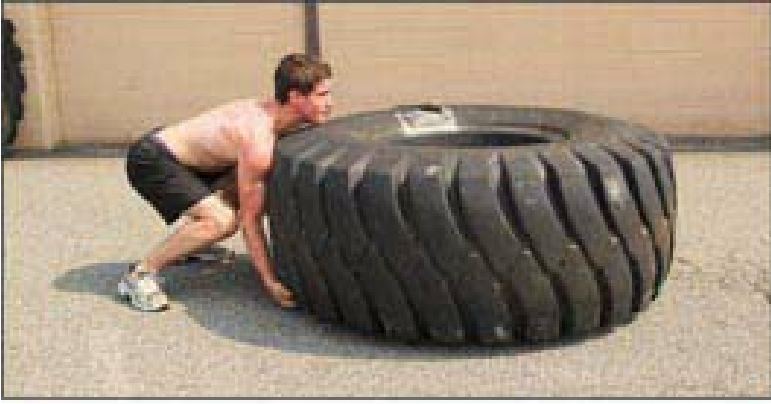


Some tools of the trade at the Original Underground Strength Gym Warehouse in Edison, NJ.

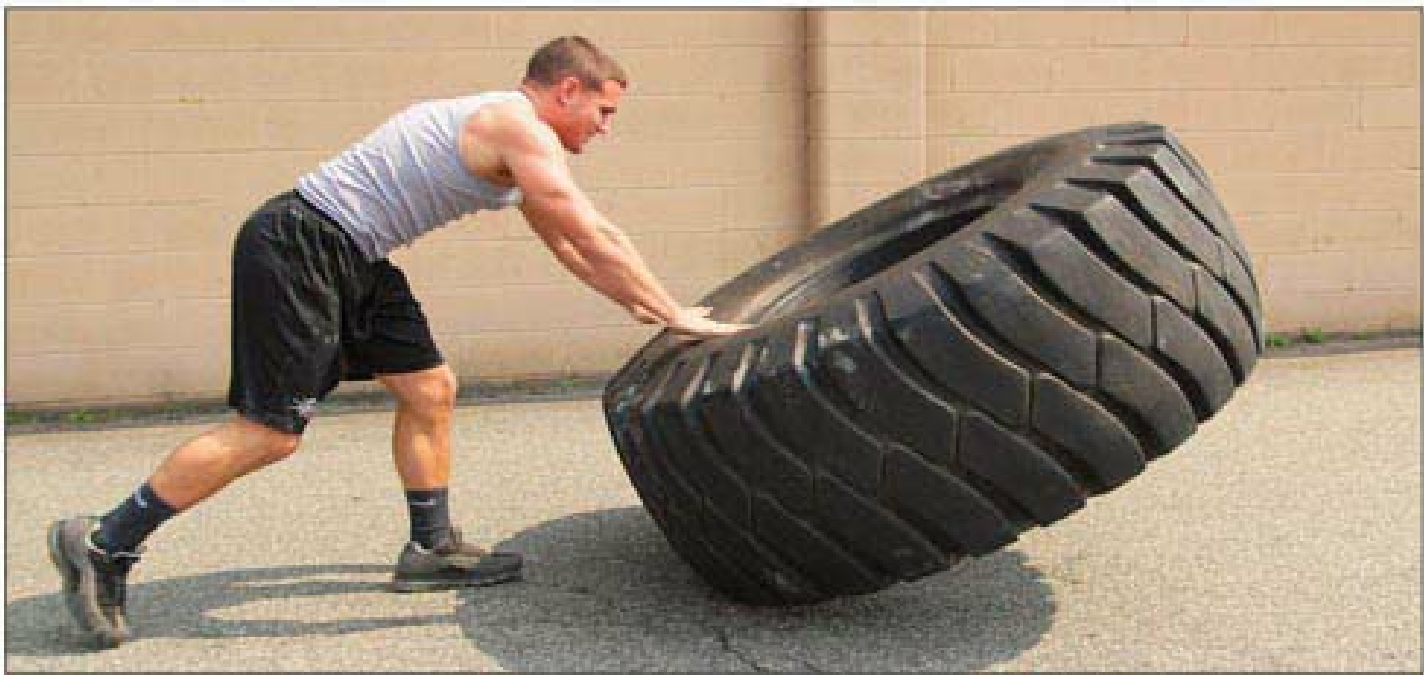
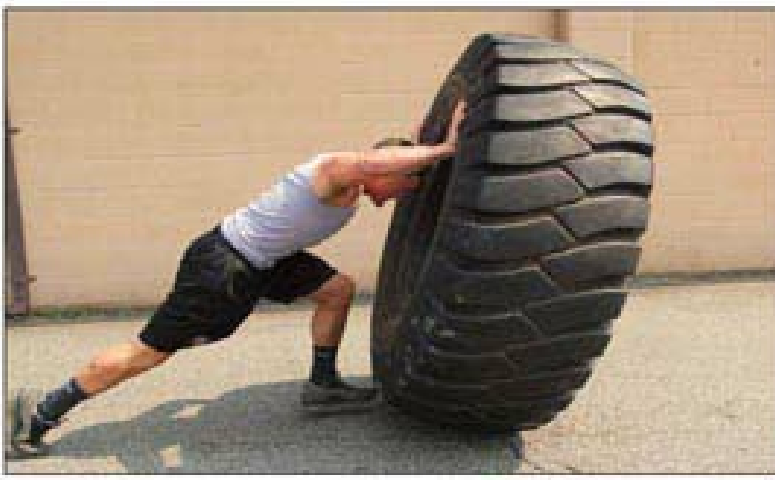
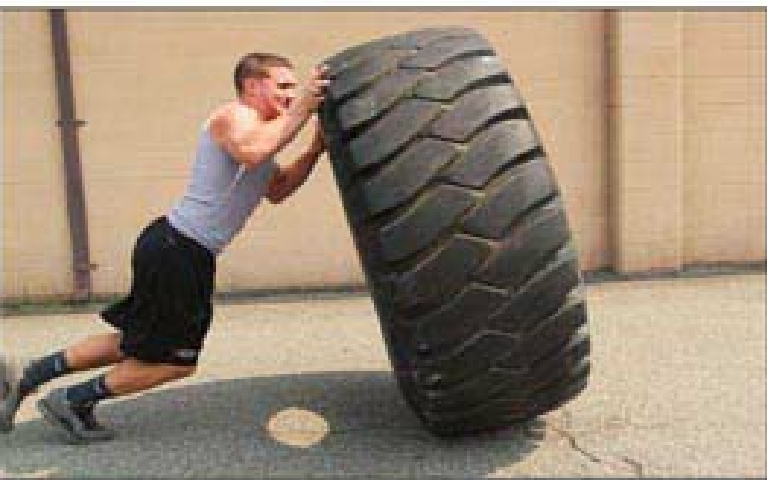
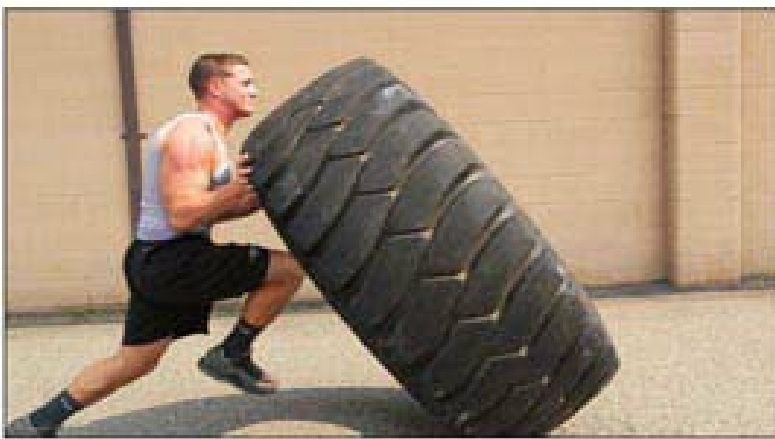
Now, let's dig deep and see how to attack some tire training!

In these tire flip photos, you see our athletes attacking the 450 lb and the 600 lb tire. I'd also like to add this before we dial in our tire flip technique. As a strength coach, I want to emphasize that this exercise comes with its inherent risks. To flip a tire, you must be:

- *Strong in ALL areas of your body*
- *Mentally fresh and ready to give it your all. A heavy tire flip might feel like a street fight when you have to battle a heavy tire. You can NOT approach a tire with any ounce of doubt in your mind. Be ready to dominate and attack that tire. Period.*
- *If you are a coach, don't get small, baby tires for 10-year-olds or weak people to flip. That is unacceptable. Tires are reserved for the strong, not new lifters, and certainly not young kids or weak people.*



450 lb tire.



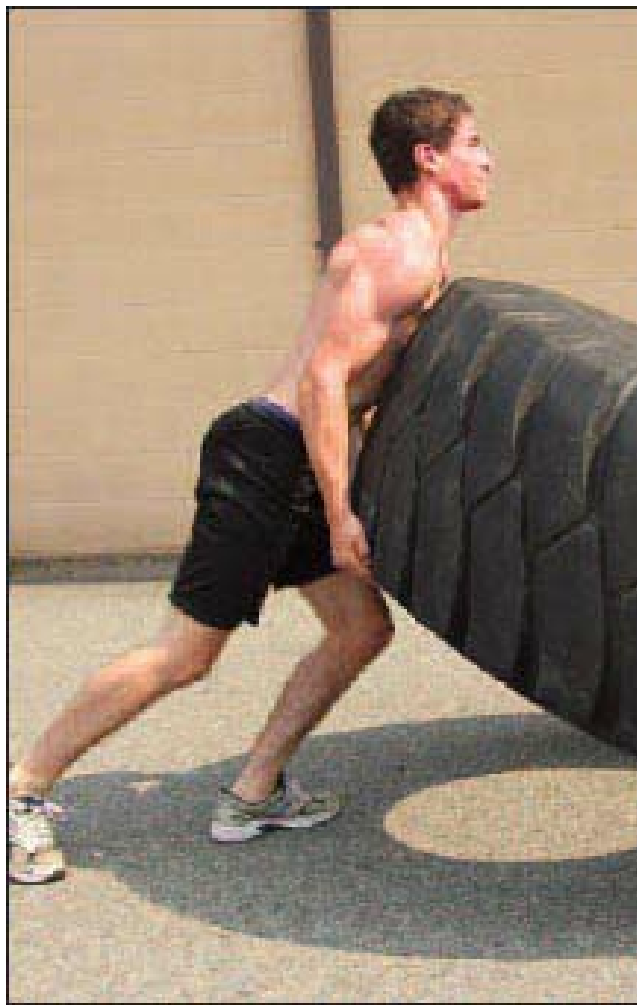
The key lifts that will help you get strong in the tire flip are the following:

- ✓ Deadlifts
- ✓ Pullups
- ✓ Squats
- ✓ Power Clean
- ✓ Clean & Press (Dumbbells, Kettlebells, Barbells)

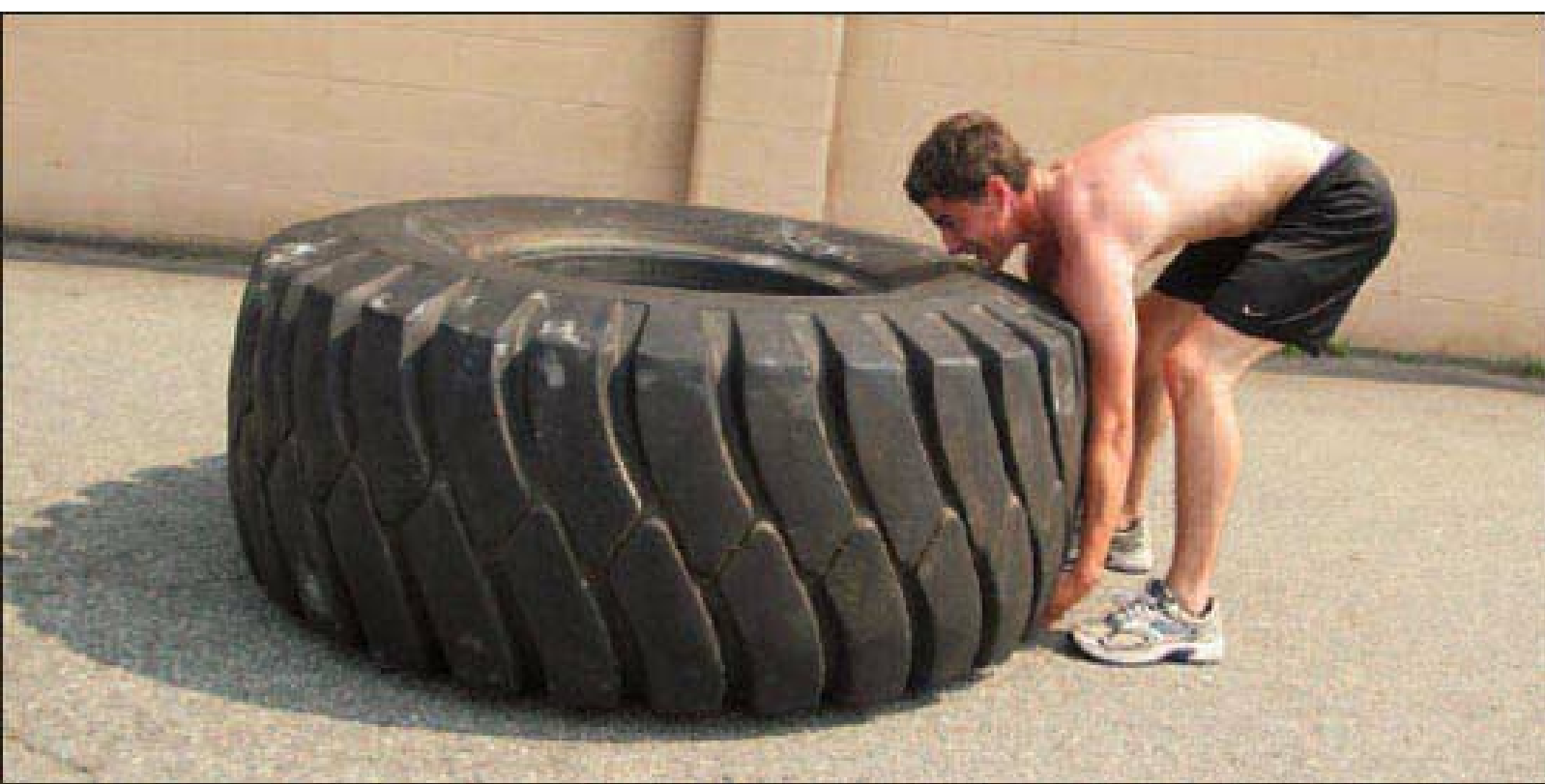
When I see young kids or weak people flipping tires with unsafe, incorrect technique, backs rounding over and biceps curling the tires up, I see an accident around the corner.

*Do you wanna flip heavy tires? Then **EARN** it! It starts with getting **STRONG** and being committed to the 5 exercises I just listed above.*

Now, let's break down the key points to help you safely and efficiently attack the tire flip.



- *Approach the tire from one to two feet away. The key is when you squat down to put your chest under the tire, you want to be at a forward leaning angle.*
- *Do NOT approach the tire with an upright stance like a deadlift, or you will get stuck on the tire flip once your legs straighten out.*
- *The stance you take depends on where YOU feel strongest. You can take a close foot stance and a wide arm grip or a wider foot stance and a narrow arm grip.*
- *Your butt and hips should be lower than your chest.*
- *Inhale with a deep breath and brace your entire body, especially the abs and back.*
- *Drive aggressively with your legs and entire body.*
- *As soon as the tire passes your mid thigh, lift one knee and boost the tire to the rack position (upper chest). Quickly switch your underhand grip to an overhand grip while keeping your hands on the tire's edge.*
- *A BIG mistake is to start wrestling with the tire and placing your hand on top of the tire. You need to push on the tire's edge and aggressively drive through the tire with everything you've got.*
- *Pretend the tire is a crowd of angry people you must run through and run it over!*



WRONG. Never round your back.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID:

- *Rounding your back*
- *Using biceps to curl the tire up instead of leg drive and knee pop.*
- *Letting the tire sit in your hands too long*
- *Not power cleaning the tire up to the rack position fast enough, which causes you to stall and get stuck with the tire on your thigh*
- *Getting too close to the tire and trying to deadlift the tire*
- *Going too heavy and choosing a tire outside of your strength ability*

I prefer low reps on the tire flip and treating it like a deadlift. Somewhere around 10 total reps is plenty on the tire flip. Hit it hard and move on.

TIRE BATTLE

There are various ways to hit the tire battle, but 2 of the variations I prefer most are the plyo push battle and the isometric battle.

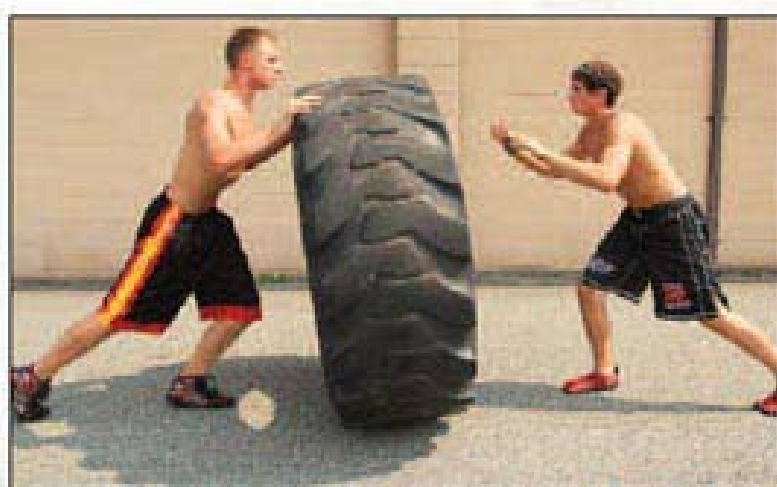
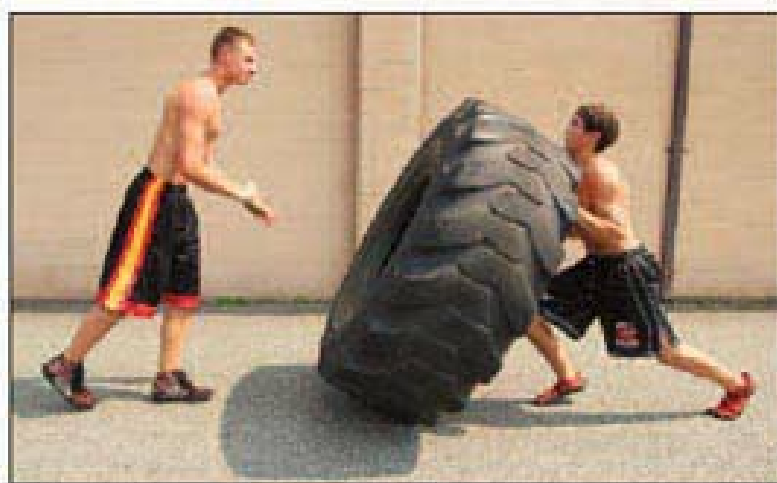
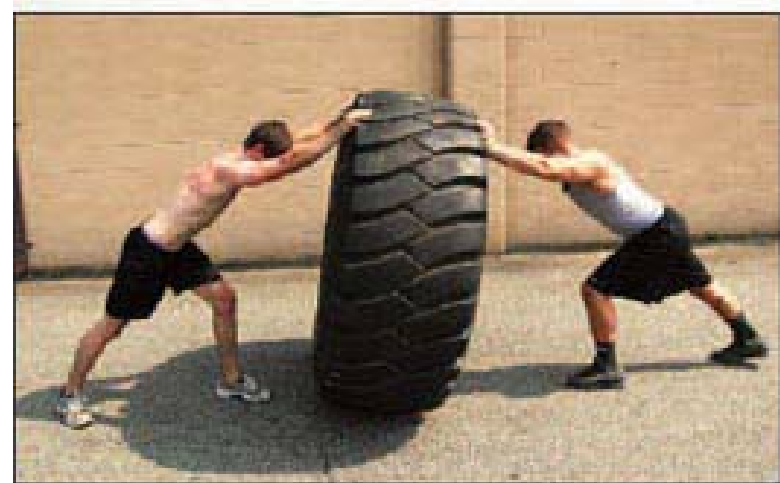
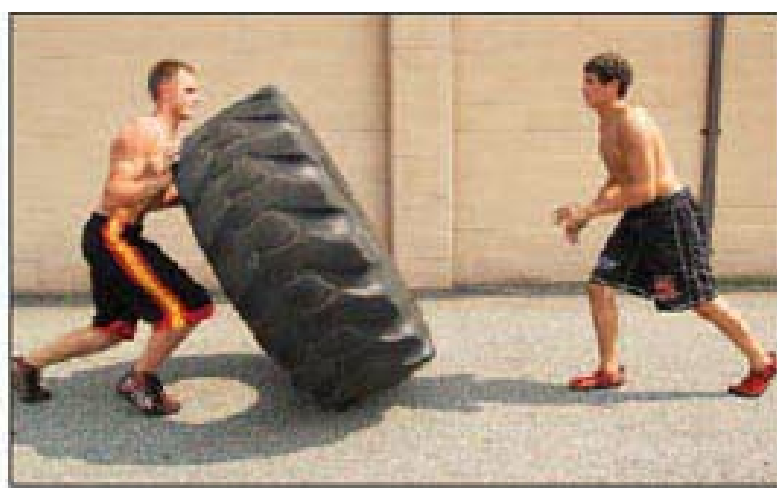
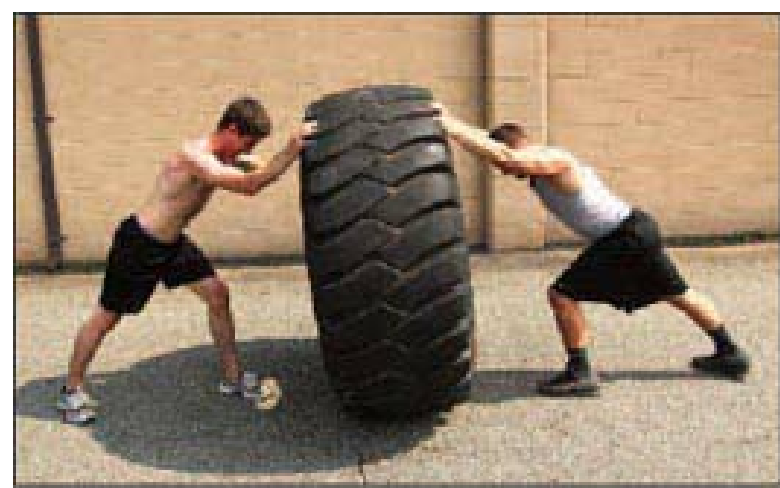
The Plyo Tire Push Battle: Get a partner around the same size and strength as you. Push the tire aggressively back and forth to one another. These are similar to performing plyo push ups because you are releasing your hands from the tire as you push explosively. This exercise will attack your pushing muscles and your abs aggressively.

Your abs and back must brace aggressively, working on stability each time you absorb the tire to ensure you don't get pushed back when the tire is pushed your way. I like switching my lead foot every rep and I encourage you to do the same. This helps with coordination and athleticism.

Choose a partner near your size and strength levels to best work the plyo tire battle. You can do these for reps, usually 10-20 reps per person or you can do these for time, anywhere from 10 - 20 seconds at a clip.

Iso Tire Battle - Instead of pushing the tire back and forth, you and your partner will place your hands against the tire and start driving with the legs and upper body. Do not pair up with someone weaker than you. This can cause you to push your partner down and hurt him.

This simulates the isometric strength you need in sports and various forms of work and combat. These can be done for times of 10-20 seconds, but longer time periods are certainly doable if you are advanced and can keep the intensity and technique high.



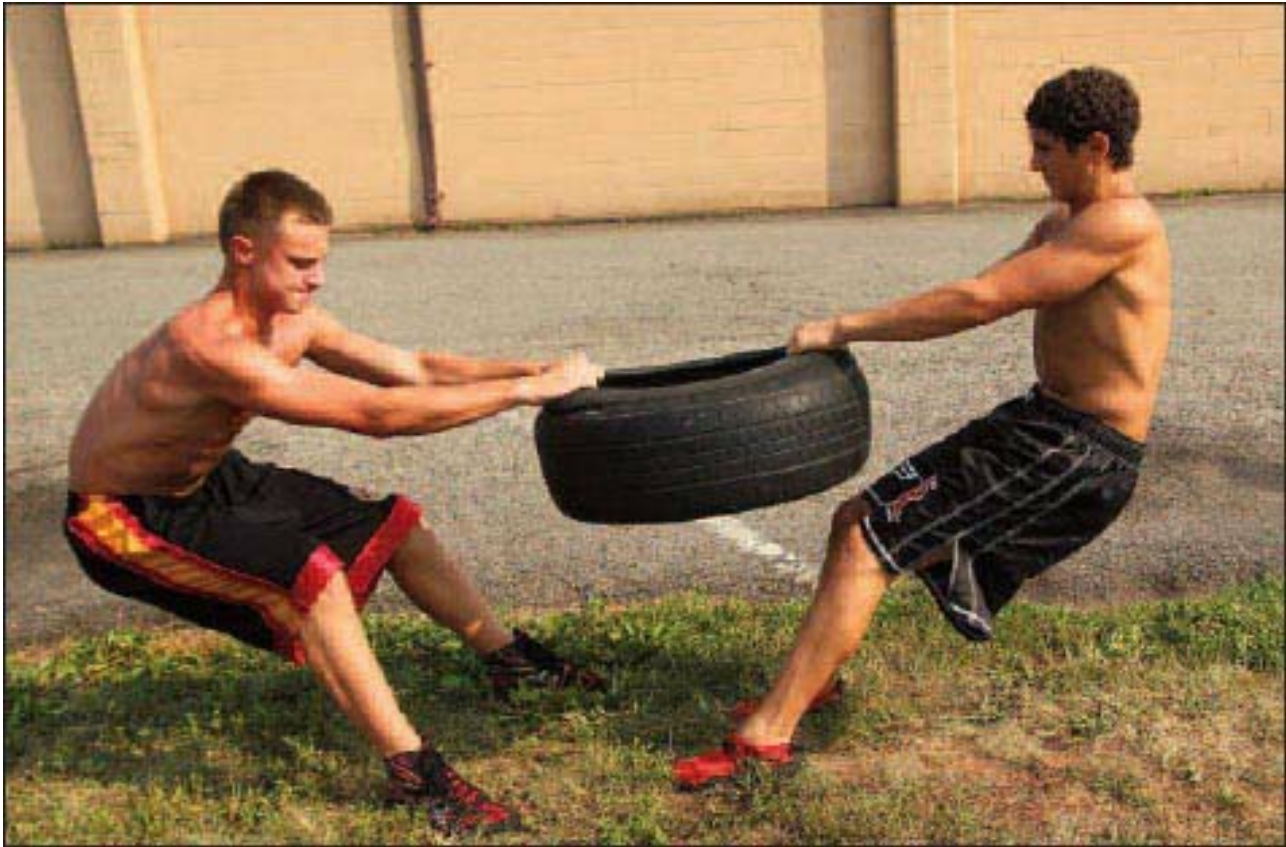
TIRE WRESTLING

These are brutal on the grip and great for developing unilateral strength in the entire body. Grab with one arm and pull back aggressively. Go for time and make sure you perform equal time periods for both sides. This exercise also teaches the athletes how to fight for the win, to be aggressive and, to get tough in order to outdo their opponents.



TIRE TUG OF WAR

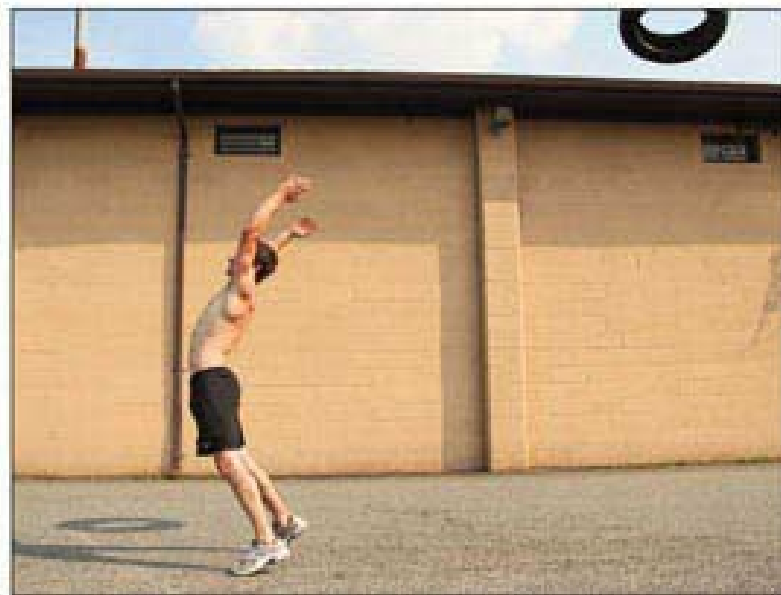
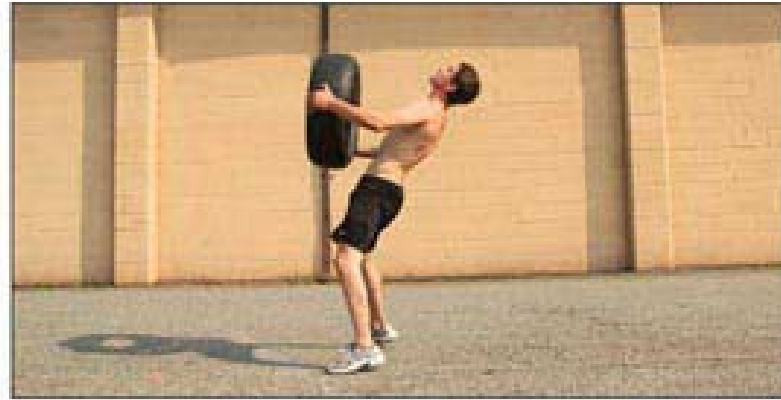
This tire tug of war is similar to the sled backwards drag. Your quads and back will get worked intensely and like any partner tire battle drill, you will test your mind and body.



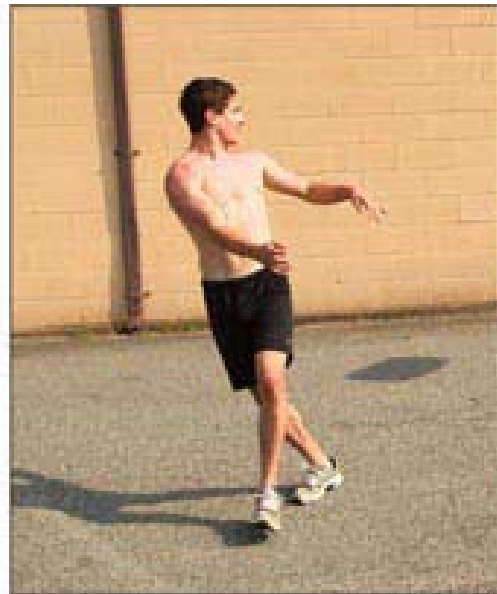
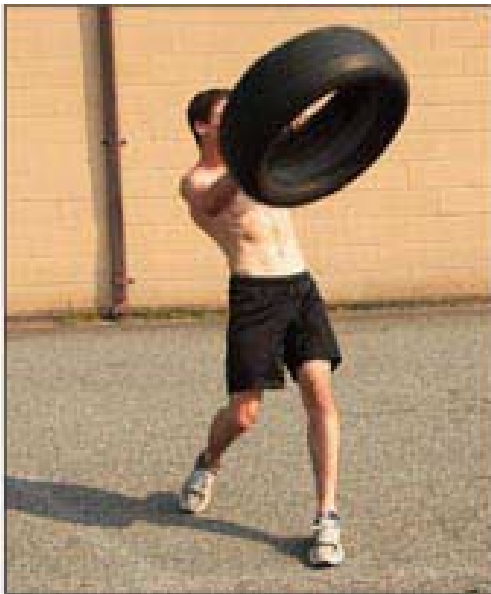
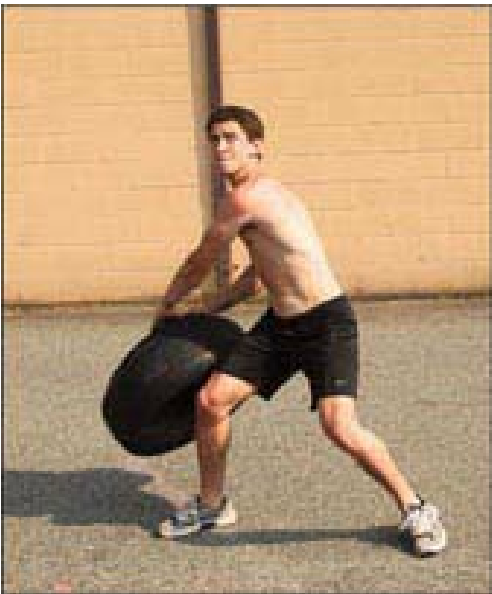
Tire Throwing For Power

TIRE TWO ARM BACK TOSS

As you can see, throwing tires is limited by your imagination. But, like all other exercises, the basics will be the best. Use one arm and 2 arms and make sure to perform equal reps to both sides when performing one arm throws.



TIRE TWO ARM SIDE THROW

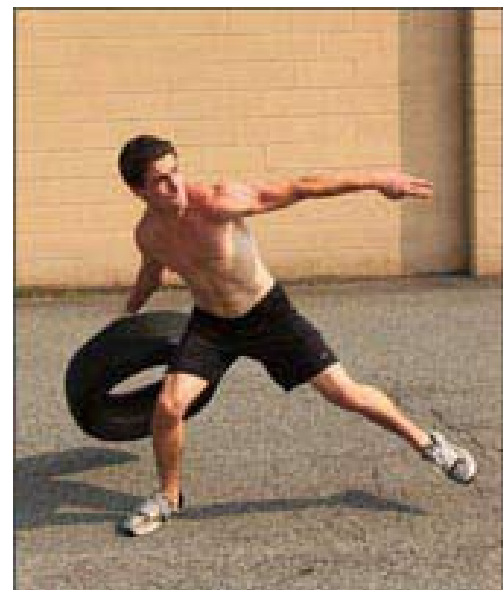


TIRE ONE ARM BACK TOSS

You can add a conditioning element by throwing the tire, running to the tire, and repeating the throws for time or desired reps. When you add the conditioning element to the tire throws, it is imperative to keep the power output high. Don't slack on the intensity of your throws because you added the conditioning element. The goal is to develop power endurance, cardiorespiratory endurance, and of course, mental toughness.



TIRE ONE ARM SIDE THROW

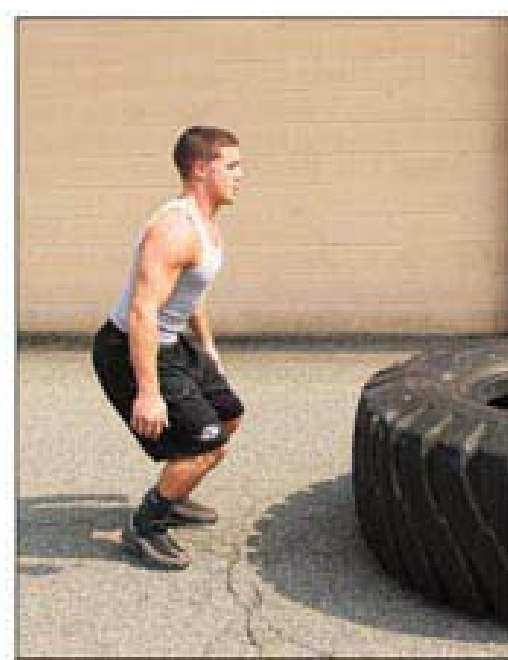
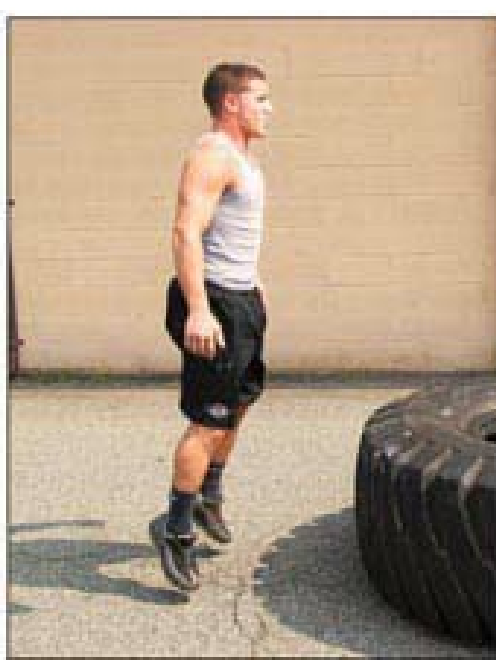
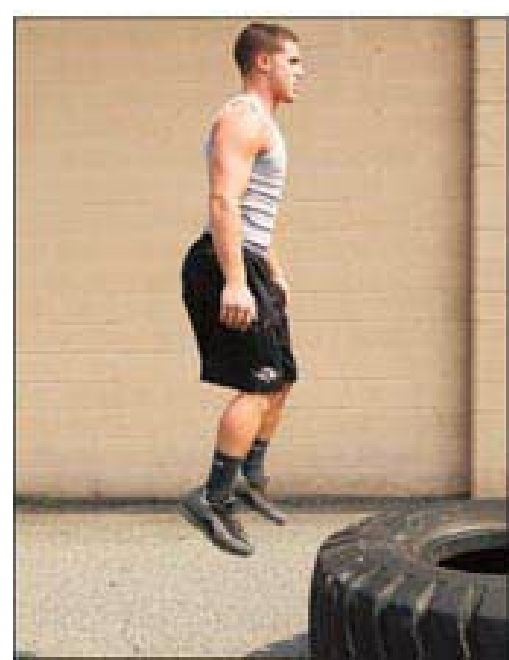
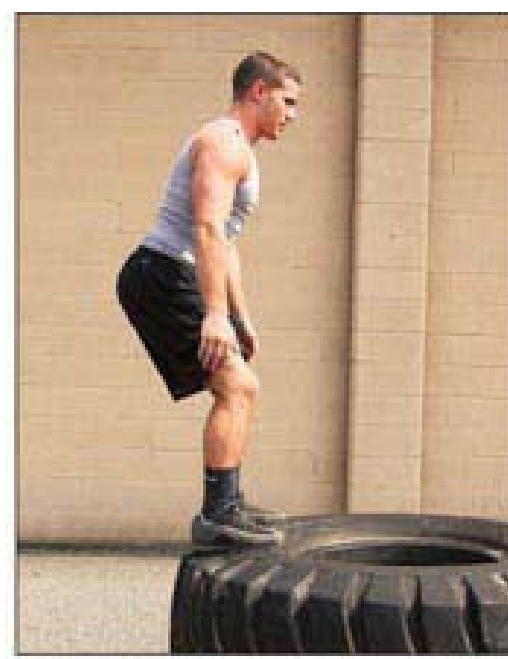
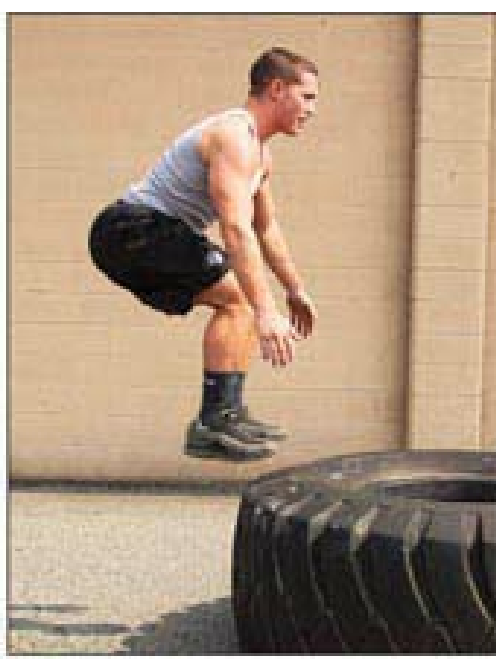
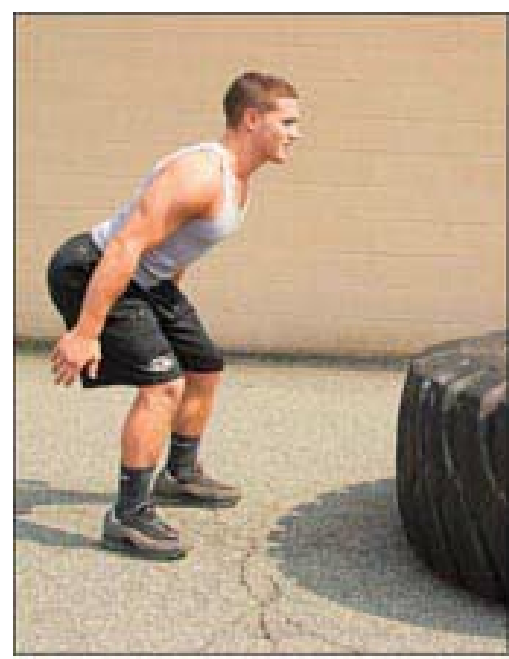


TIRE JUMP

You don't have a box for your jumps? NO problem, make due with what you've got. For starters, I like to jump up and then step down. When you step down, alternate the leg that steps down to develop balance. Jumping off the tire is where I see technique deteriorate and injuries occur.

Proper Tire Jumping Technique:

- To start the jump, approach the tire about 1 - 2 ft away from the tire. Stand tall and raise your arms overhead.*
- Bring your arms down quickly and behind you while pushing your hips back and squatting half way. Quickly swing the arms up and jump on top of the tire.*
- Land with your knees slightly bent and hips back. I like the commands of jump, land, and stand. So, upon landing, stand tall and then step down and repeat.*



Common Mistakes To Avoid When Jumping:

- *Not pushing the hips back and engaging your posterior chain before the jump*
- *Dropping the chest to parallel or almost parallel to the ground. This is a common mistake for athletes who don't understand how to engage their posterior before jumping.*
- *Landing with the knees buckling inward*
- *Jumping off the tire (reserved for advanced athletes and preferably not done on tires/boxes over 24")*

TIRE LOADING (BIG JUMPS, WORK AS A TEAM)

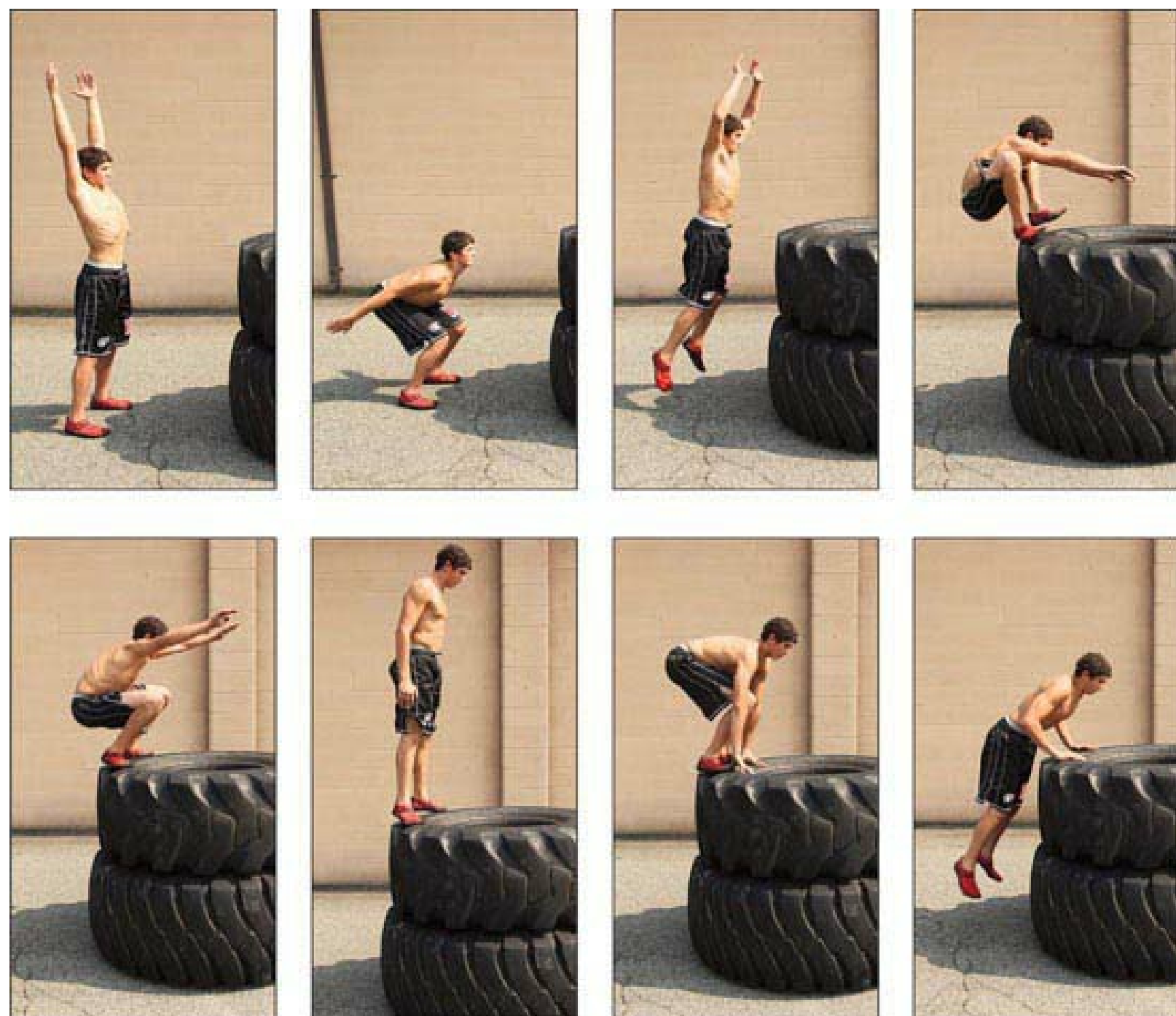
To start jumping for maximum power, work together as a team and place another big tire on top. Team work makes this much easier.



BIG TIRE JUMP

Following the jumping tips explained earlier, perform the same style for the big tire. For the bigger tire, you can start with what we call an approach jump.

Approach jumps are when you walk up to the tire and jump, similar to how you would jog up to do a lay up on the basketball court. Push your hips back, squat to about half depth and whip your arms up quickly as you jump up.



Common mistakes on BIG tire jumps are all the same mistakes listed previously.

- *In addition, we also see people trying to jump on high tires and boxes to serve their egos. You'll notice those not ready or simply not explosive enough will actually NOT jump very high. Instead, they will jump a little bit off the ground and raise their knees extremely high.*
- *This helps hip mobility but is not a true jump. When jumping, the body should be gaining vertical height when done correctly.*
- *If the landing is ass to grass, you will know the box/tires are too high.*
- *Be smart and jump heights that ensure proper technique and optimal safety.*

If you can't jump high enough, it is a green light telling you to get stronger, more explosive, and to learn how to properly engage your posterior.

There are plenty of movements and exercises in this book to build your explosive power and vertical jump. Some of my favorites are:

- ✓ Squats
- ✓ Box Squats
- ✓ Deadlifts
- ✓ Forward Sled Drags
- ✓ Stair Sprints
- ✓ Truck Pushing
- ✓ Heavy Lunges
- ✓ Kettlebell Swings
- ✓ Pullups

Yes, you'll notice I said pullups. When you have a strong upper body, especially your lats, you will increase your overall speed and jumping ability. The upper body works with your lower body when jumping. Jumping is a full body exercise!

As simple as jumping is, many forget about its importance. I like getting in 10-20 jumps 3 x week. Our athletes who can jump better and demonstrate power and soft landings can intensify their jumps in a variety of ways.

We have wooden boxes and foam boxes for jumps, which allow for more variety when jumping compared to landing on tires. But the simple addition of explosive jumps to your training will improve athleticism and power.

Here are some box jump variations we use:

- *Seated box jump: Start the jump from a seated position.*
- *Jump holding dumbbells: We start light at 15 lbs and progress slowly with weighted jumps.*
- *Take off on 2 feet, land on 1 foot. Perform equal reps for each foot.*
- *Turning jump: Face the box and turn right or left and catch your landing in mid-air. You can also start the jump facing right or left, and turn forward in mid-air to land straight ahead. I reserve these for athletes who have demonstrated control and proficiency in their jumps.*
- *Kneeling jumps: Start kneeling, jump to your feet, and immediately jump onto the box.*

If you are an advanced lifter, try jumping later in your workout, after your 2nd or 3rd exercise. This forces your body to recruit more muscle fibers, as you are already fatigued from heavy lifting. Like all these methods, experiment with them, test them, and see what works best for you.

KEG TRAINING

I was the dead of summer. The year? 1999 or 2000. The years slip my mind and are hard to keep track. I was a bartender/bouncer in a shot and beer joint.

I was a teacher, and with no money coming my way in the summer, I needed a job. I didn't know jack diddly about alcohol, as I barely drank when I went out with my friends.

I was told to go to a certain bar in the middle of a hard-nosed blue collar town. "They hire all the teachers," I was told. So, I went to that shot and beer joint around lunch on a weekday and by luck, the owner was eating his lunch, sitting at the end of the bar.



I introduced myself to him and told him all the other local bars told me to come here. "I'll be honest with you. I don't drink and I don't know anything about bartending, but I'm a hard worker and I'll learn anything you teach me if you give me a chance," I said.

I got thrown into the mix and had to learn mostly on my own. The bar was old school. The kegs were in the basement, which you would access by walking outside to the sidewalk and lifting the hatch, walking down a broken set of cement stairs.



If the beer ran out you had to walk down the stairs and carry the keg back up. I learned this the hard way when I was filling in for the morning bartender for 2 weeks while he vacationed. I was finishing a double shift, working from 6 am until 5 pm. Around 4 PM, one keg ran out of beer. I hustled outside and was pretty darn exhausted from being up so early and running around like a mad man. The bar was pretty hectic, situated next to a car manufacturing plant and lots of heavy drinkers, it was a hectic pace.

I carefully made my way into the basement as I walked down the crumbling stairs. The kegs were awaiting their trip up the stairs, and I was the lucky guy to do it. My first grab of the keg I KNEW this was gonna be a helluva trip. Filled with beer, that keg felt about 150 lbs, but as soon as I began carrying it, that 150 lbs felt like 250 lbs.

The beer sloshed around and pushed me around. I deadlifted the keg up one stair at a time, half my foot hanging off each broken down stair. I wrestled with the keg and finally made my way out of the basement and into the sunlight.

I carried the keg into the bar and the regulars told me, "Hey, we woulda helped you; you always go down there with one of us and shoulda used the hand truck to wheel the keg in."

I remember thinking to myself, "Holy shit, that was tough." I played it off like a tough guy and told them I was fine, no worries. As luck would have it, 2 more beer kegs went empty on me. First one keg, then when I brought the keg back up to the bar, the next keg went out on me.

I remember leaving the bar that day with my biceps and forearms twitching from holding the keg so intensely with my arms bent in an isometric fashion. I never really got used to carrying kegs up those mangled stairs. It never got any easier.

The ultimate challenge was in the winter time, when the rain would leak down the stairs and freeze. There were two boards of wood, and you had to lay them on the stairs, and roll and push the keg up the wood while someone else spotted you from your back to ensure you didn't fall backwards and get steamrolled by a keg.

That winter the owner finally turned his old school shot and beer joint into a somewhat less old school place and got the keg tap to run down to the basement so we didn't have to carry kegs anymore.

I must have been too oblivious to the power of training with kegs, but those were the times of training in a globo gym, and I knew of no other way. Well, now I know and soon enough, so will you.

How To Use Kegs

When I first tried getting a keg from a liquor store the owner looked at me like I was a crazy man, asking for empty kegs. He probably thought I was gonna cause trouble with them. This taught me to ask questions with my explanation of being a Strength Coach who would fill these kegs with sand or water for strongman training.

I learned to ask the right questions the right way. I also went to a bar that was owned by one of the parents of one of my coaches, whose other son was a senior when I was a freshman. The family was a crew of ass kickers.

They were feared wrestlers, one of them a state champ and the other a state runner up. I went to their bar and saw the dad eating his lunch. I introduced myself to him and told him I used to wrestle for Edison and how his son was my coach and his other son was a senior when I was freshman.



I explained how I train wrestlers and use kegs for strongman training, and was wondering if I could buy a few empty kegs. He obliged and I was off with 3 kegs, happy as all heck!

The first thing you MUST do when training with kegs is to release all the air pressure. Turn the keg on its side and use either a keg tap or a flat head screw driver to release the air pressure. Do NOT put your face anywhere near the end of the keg.

After you release the air pressure, you can remove the washer and pull the funnel out, rinse out the keg and then fill it up as heavy as you wish. I have used water, sand, and steel shot and the easiest to use is sand. Don't mix sand and water, or the sand will harden and you will have chunks of sand banging around. The dry sand will move around freely.

If you want, you can remove the entire funnel and ask a welder to weld the top of your keg shut. Lucky for me, next to my gym is a machine shop, and they cut stainless steel tops to weld the kegs shut. I suggest getting 2 or 3 kegs so you can vary the weights.

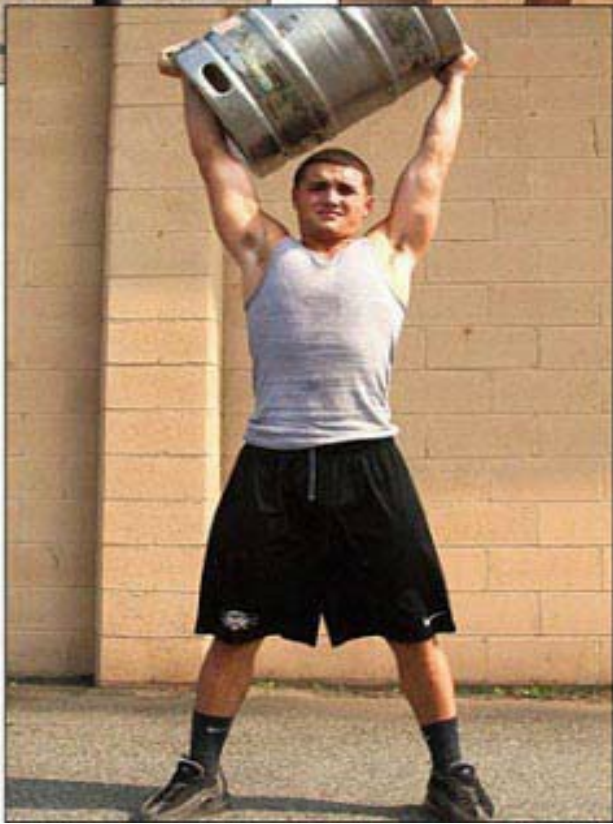
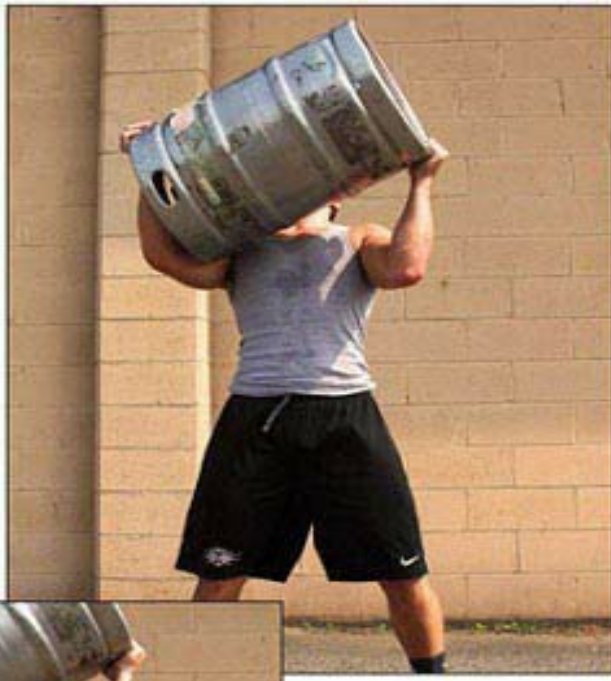
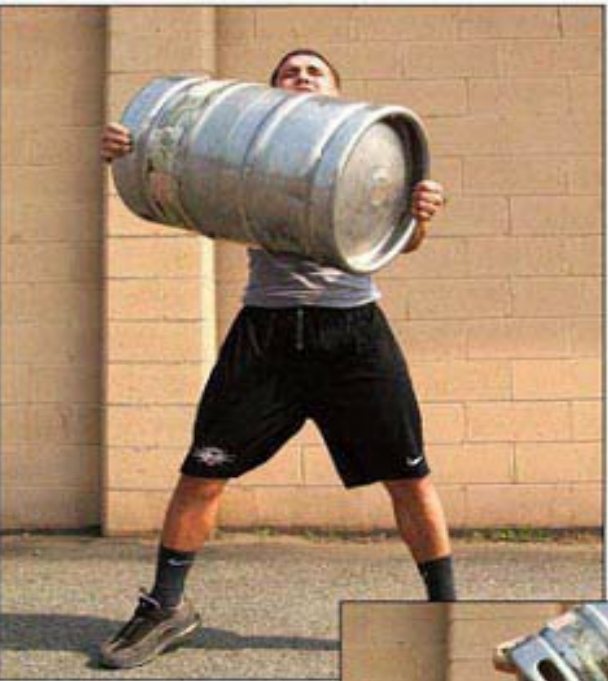
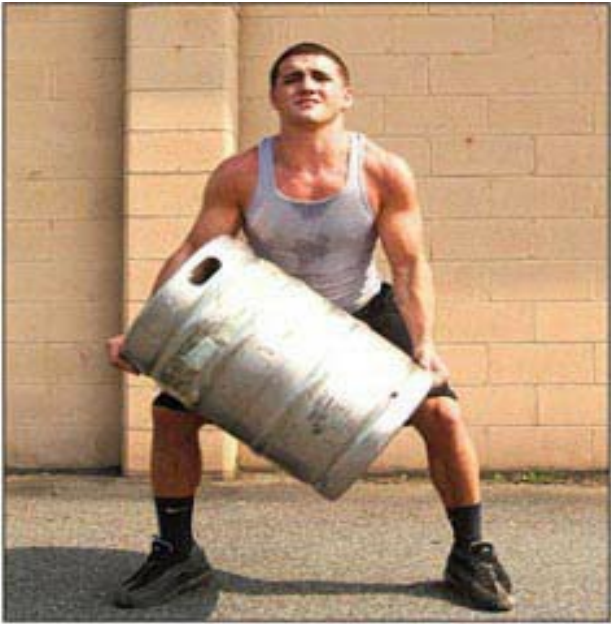
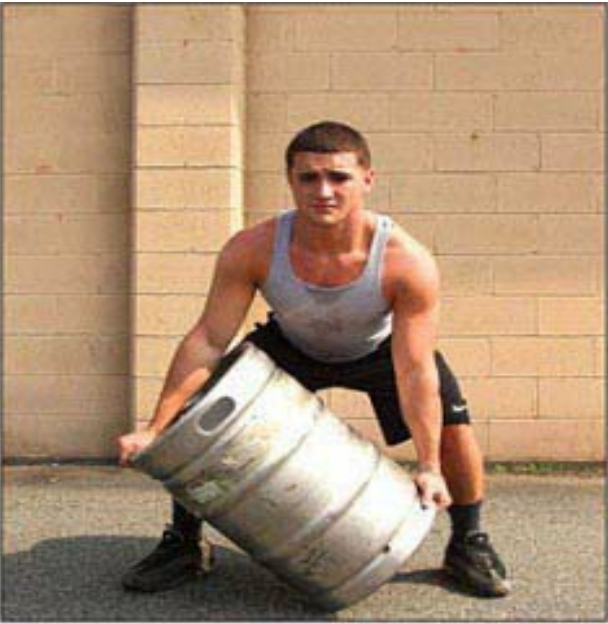
If you plan on throwing kegs, you need them to be lighter, so keep all these factors in mind. Keg training will focus on very basic movements. Because the sand or water inside your keg is shifting, the basic exercises require advanced knowledge. The key is for you to remain extremely tight when lifting kegs; brace your entire body, and do not allow the keg to push you around.

KEG CLEAN AND PRESS (OFF-SET GRIP)

- The off-set grip is where one hand is set high on the keg and the other is set lower. This allows you to control the keg more easily when performing a clean or clean and press.
- If using an off-set grip, make sure you perform equal reps by switching your top and

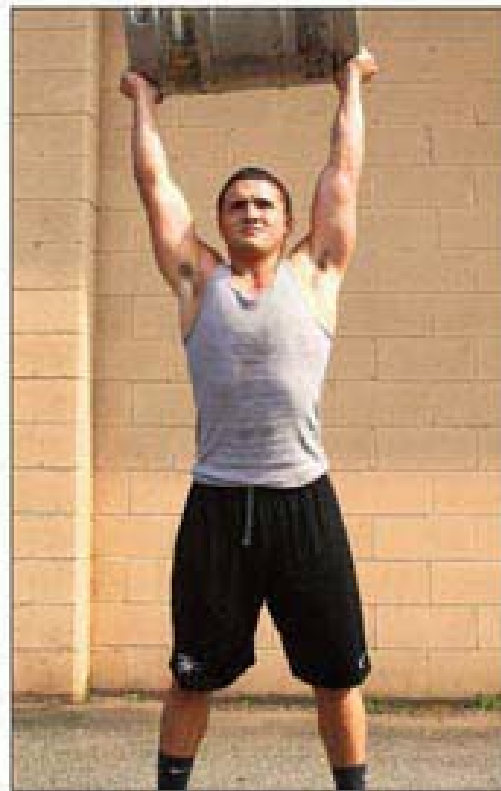
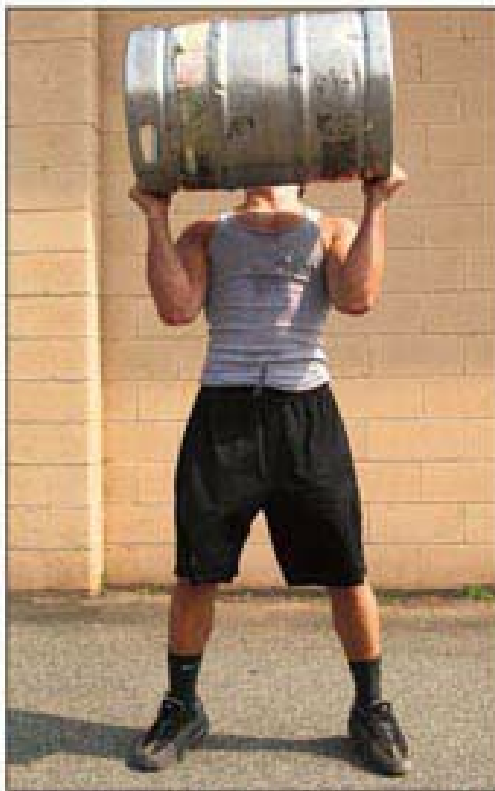
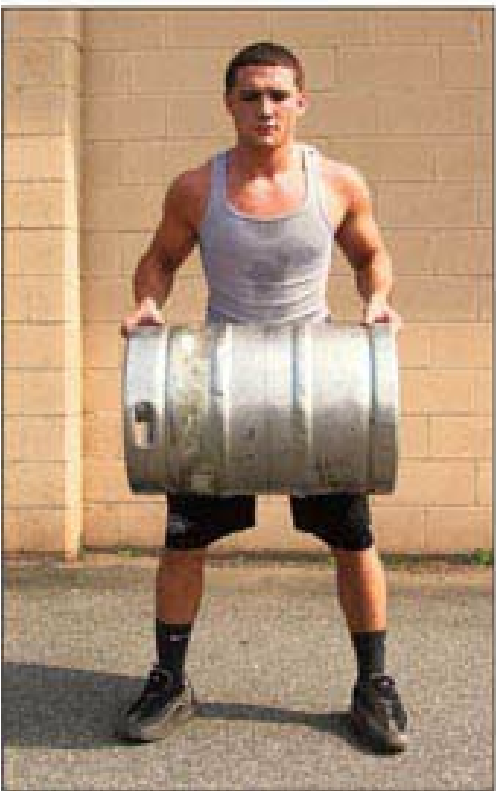
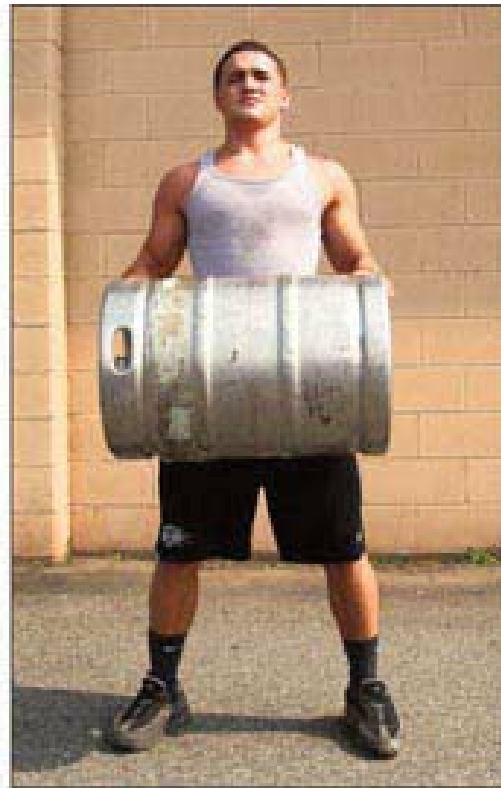
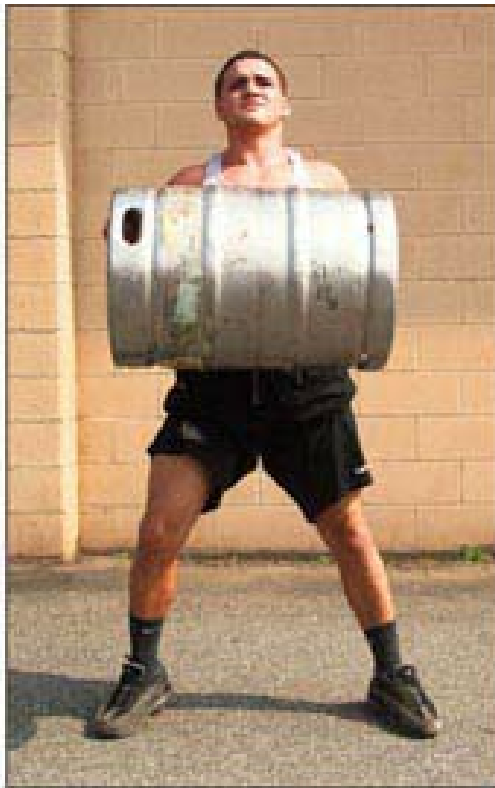
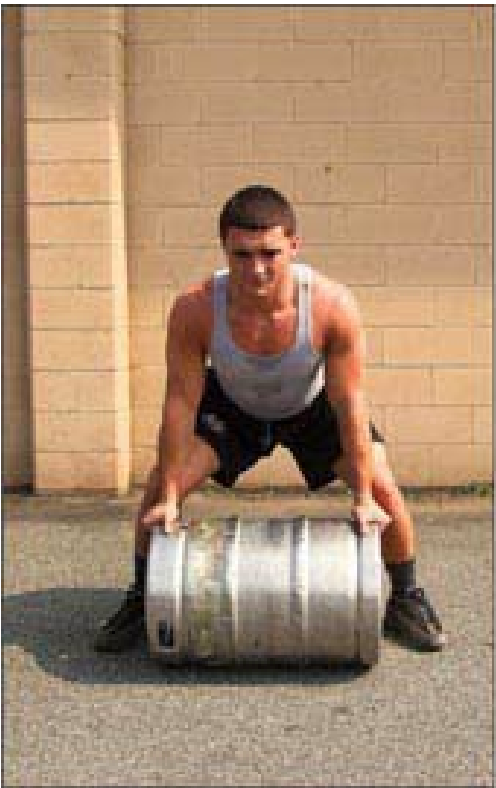
bottom hand as necessary.

- *Use a wider stance to deadlift the keg up and to your hip crease.*
- *From here, sit back with your hips and roll the keg up to your chest or pull the keg from the ground to your chest. The style you use for cleaning the keg depends on your strength, your preference, and the weight of the keg.*
- *Before pressing the keg overhead, inhale and take a deep breath, bracing your abs, legs, glutes, and your entire body.*
- *Press the keg overhead and poke your head through slightly at the top.*
- *Hold the lock out position for a 2-count, and lower the keg under control—first to your chest, and then sit back to bring the keg to your hips and then the ground.*
- *Switch your top and bottom hand and perform the next rep for prescribed reps.*



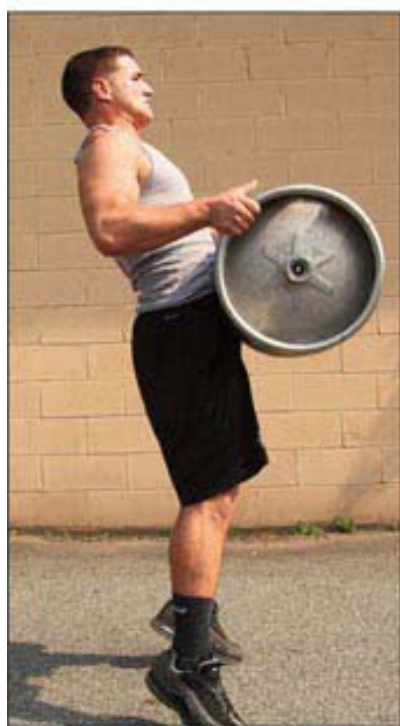
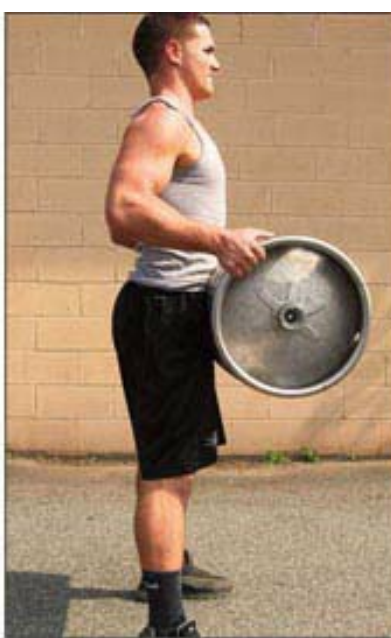
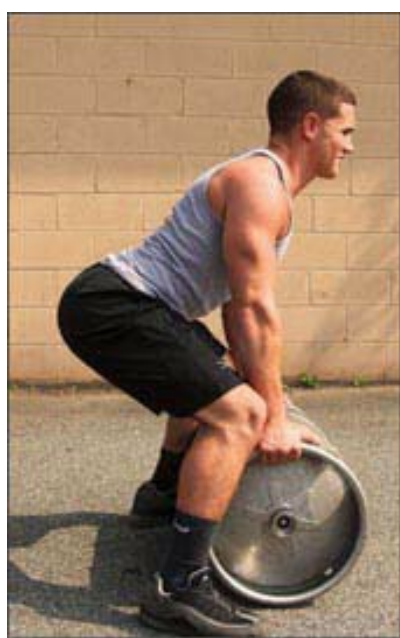
KEG CLEAN AND PRESS (REGULAR GRIP)

- *The regular grip will require more control and stability.*
- *When you clean the keg to the rack position (your chest), be very wary, as the keg will use momentum and can push you back or hit you in the chin.*
- *Hold your chin up for added safety.*
- *Stabilize the keg by rolling your elbows up and forward as you would with a barbell in the rack position of the barbell front squat or clean.*
- *Again, like all overhead presses, stabilize with full body tension and then press overhead for a solid lock out.*



KEG VIPER PRESS

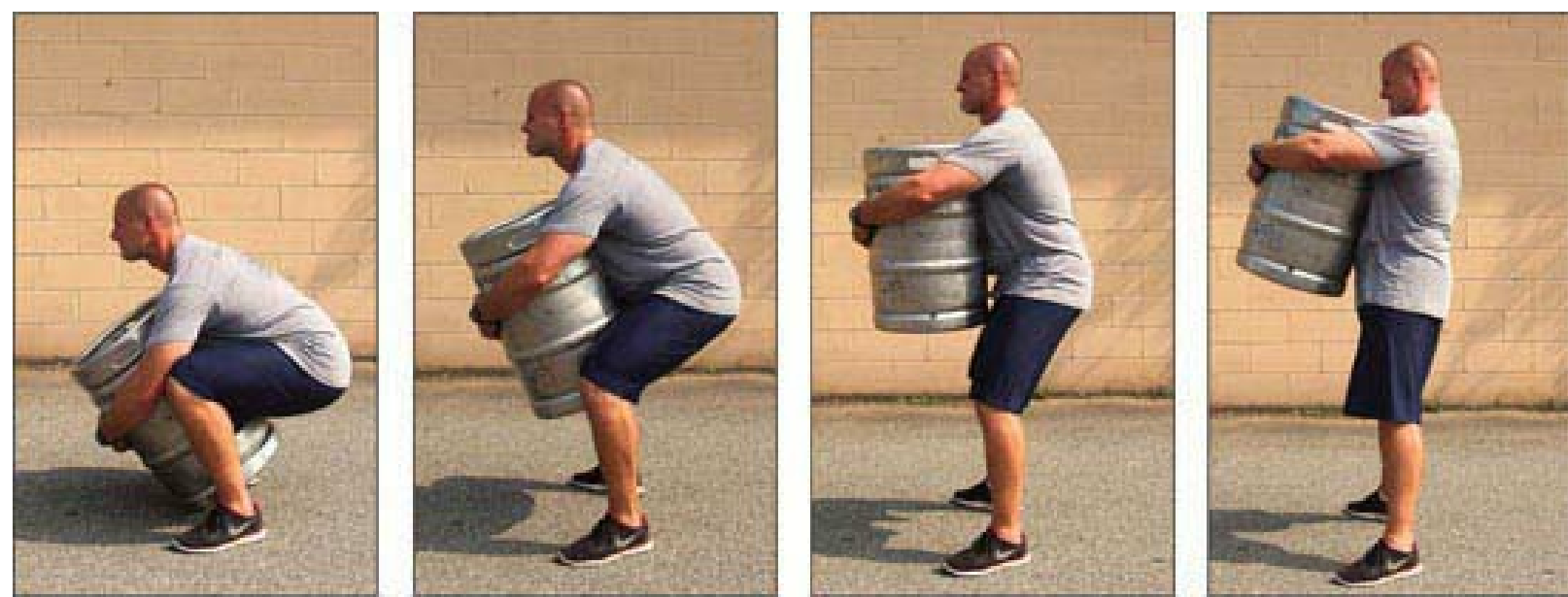
From the side here, you can see how we roll the keg up. This is called a viper press, as you are using your hips to roll the keg up. This is also used with a strongman log, and teaches you to use aggressive hip action when lifting and cleaning heavy objects.



KEG BEAR HUG SQUAT

Squat down and angle the keg forward. Wrap your arms tightly around the keg and squeeze aggressively. Deadlift the keg up and squeeze your glutes at the top. Return to the ground, and repeat for prescribed reps or carry away!

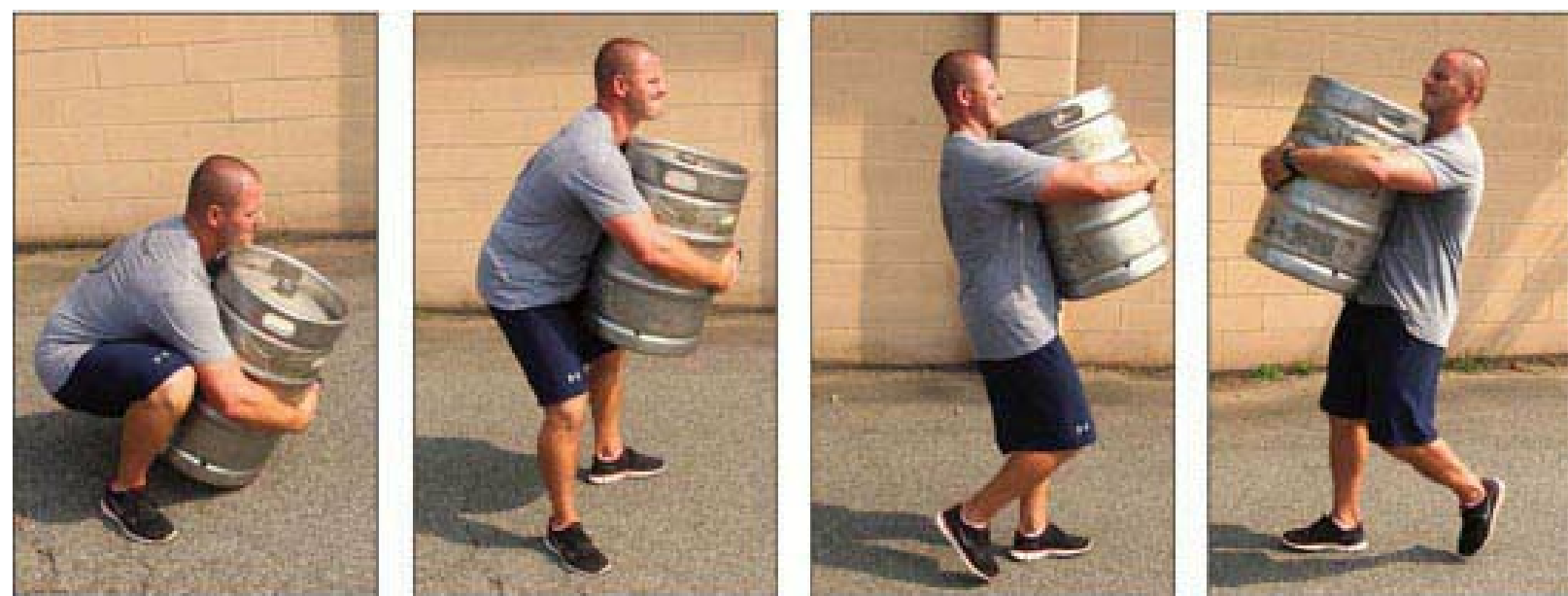




KEG BEAR HUG CARRY

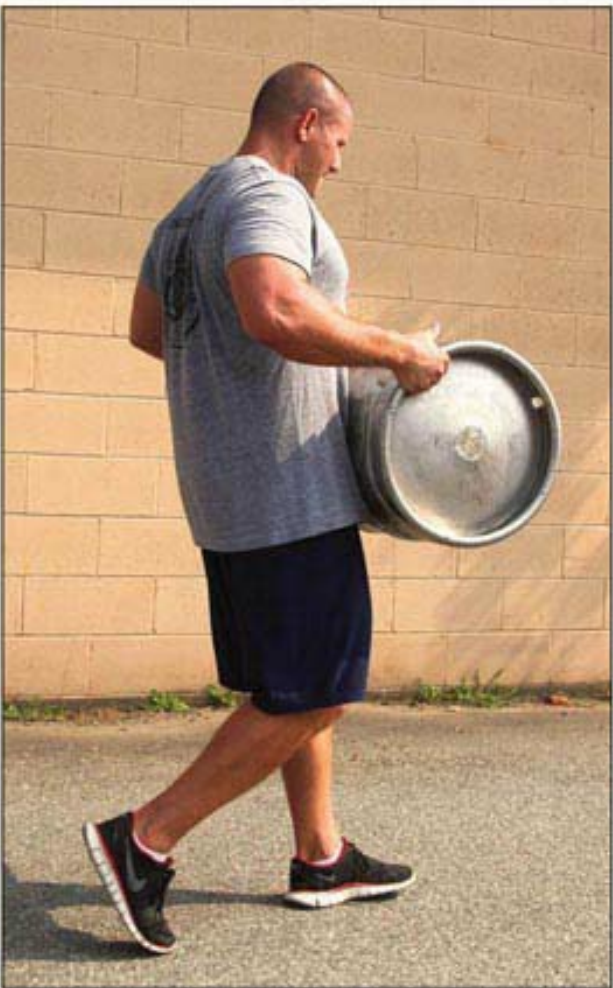
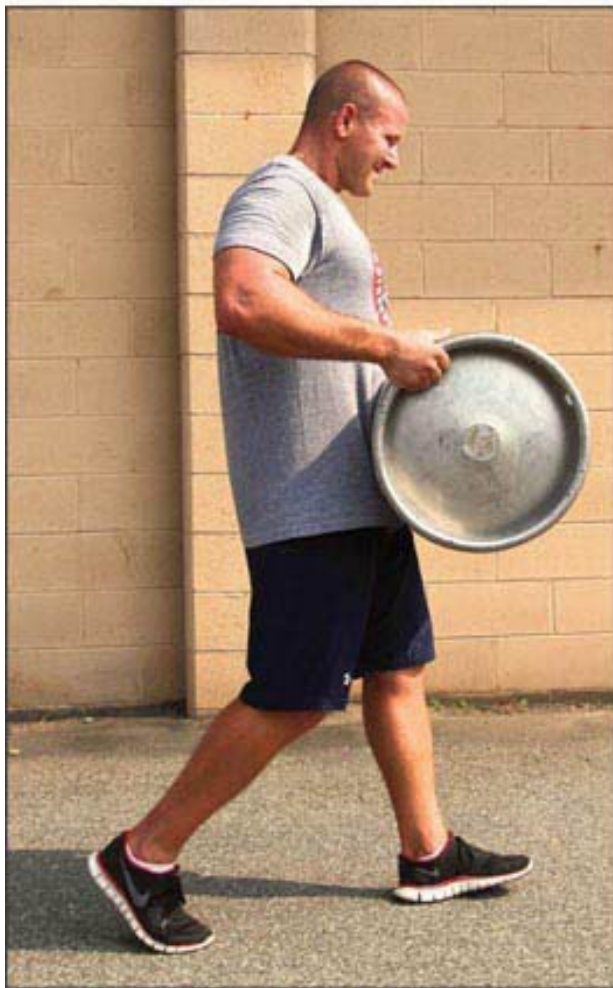
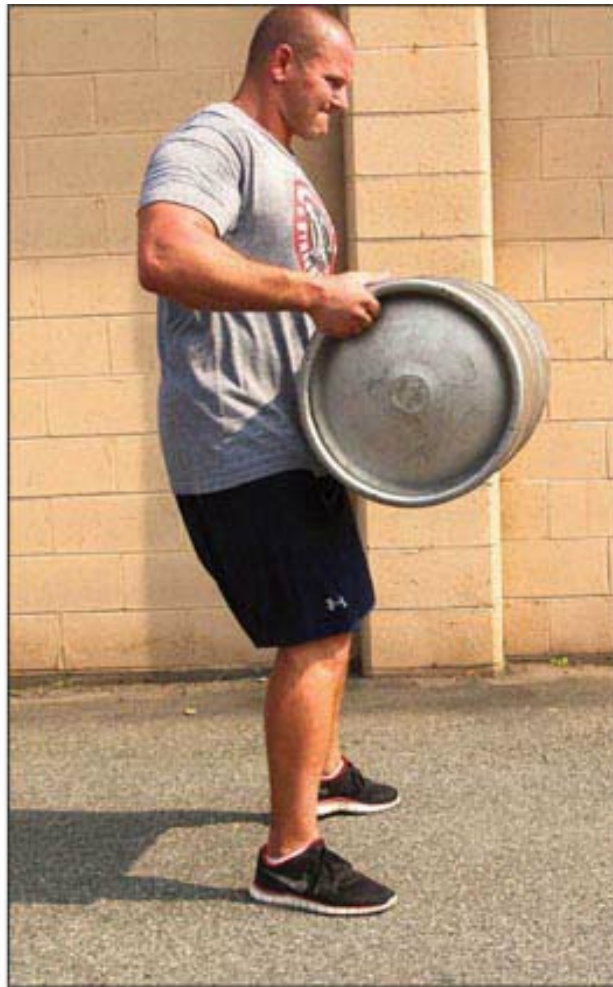
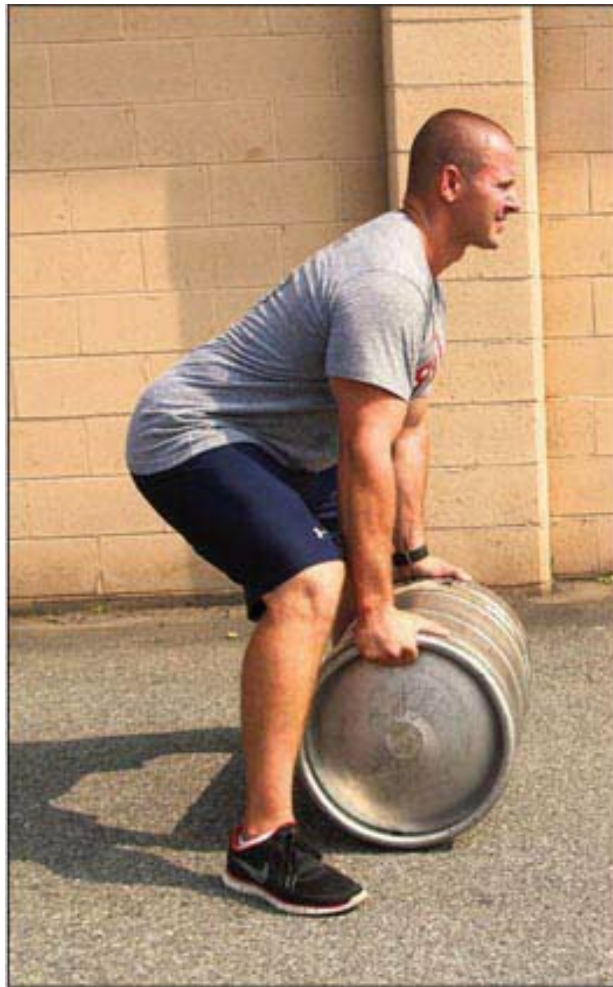
Lift the keg with your bear hug technique and carry for distance. Carry in a straight path, or zig zag around cones. Changing the path or the surface is always a game changer for any odd object carry.

Carrying kegs on sand is especially challenging, as is a grass field. The soft surfaces also allows you to safely drop the keg if you need to, whereas on concrete you must be very careful when dropping kegs.



KEG HIP CARRY

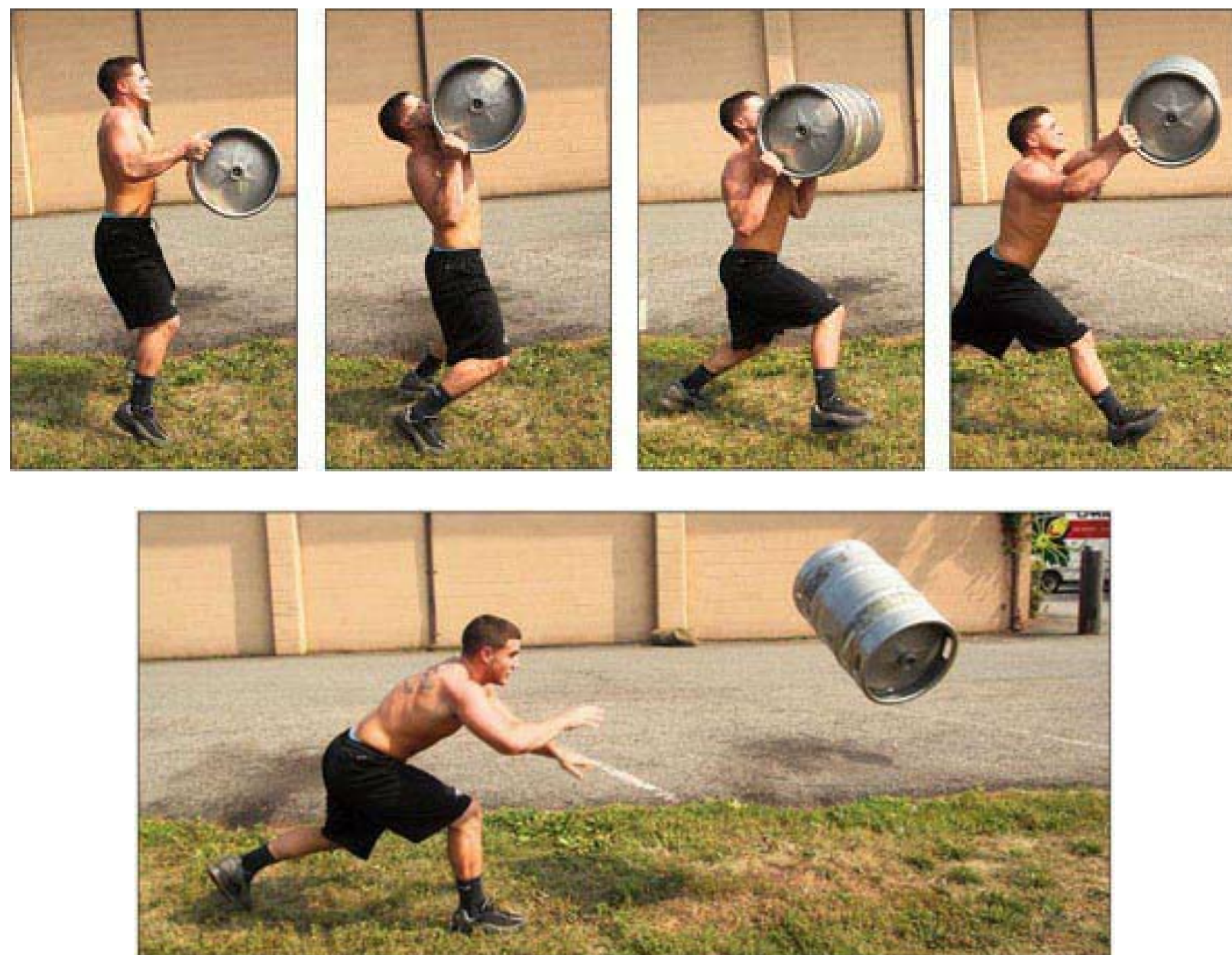
- *This is one of my favorite carries. The hip carry is so simple, yet so challenging, and highly effective for full body strength. This was the carry I learned at the bar.*
- *Deadlift the keg up and use a regular or off-set grip. Pull your elbows back and keep the keg at the crease of your hip; do not allow the arms to hang down.*
- *Your biceps, back, legs, and forearms will get hammered on these.*



KEG THROW

- *Another favorite of mine, use a lighter keg and prepare to do work!*
- *Perform a clean with a normal grip.*
- *Quickly step forward and throw the keg as far ahead as possible, with maximum power output.*
- *If you have a training partner you can stand across from one another and go for desired reps or time.*
- *Training alone you can walk up or jog up and repeat.*
- *This drill is only to be performed on grass or sand, and make sure you have clearance all around for maximum safety.*

We have used this drill as a finisher with 20-30 reps per person or for 5 - 10 minutes for maximum reps. Those are just some ideas and you can and should create your own

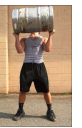


These keg workouts are going to be simple, and some have not been photographed. Exercises that you use with a sandbag can also be replicated with the keg.

Try the following keg exercises using the same technique as you would the sandbag for a slightly different feel:

- ✓ Shouldering
- ✓ Shoulder + Shoulder Carry
- ✓ Zercher Squat
- ✓ Bear Hug Squat
- ✓ Zercher Deadlift
- ✓ Shoulder Squat
- ✓ Shoulder Lunge
- ✓ Carry Medley

All too often, people get excited and want endless variations when carrying kegs. The 3 exercises I stick to over and over again are the hip carries, the clean and press and the keg throw (clean, press, & throw).



I add variety by performing the drills at different times in workouts to make them more challenging. Try the workouts below, and don't be afraid to create your own keg workouts. Because there are fewer variations for the kegs, I am listing a variety of keg workouts that you can choose to implement in conjunction with free weights, tires, sandbags, and bodyweight.

KEG AND TIRE WORKOUTS

BEGINNER KEG & TIRE WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Tire Throw (Back Toss) x 10 Total
- 2) Keg Hip Carry 5 x 100 ft
- 2A) Weighted Pushups 4 x 8 - 12 reps
- 2B) Dumbbell Farmer Walks 4 x 100 ft
- 3) Sled Drags 4 x 150 ft

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Tire Jumps x 10 Total Reps
- 2) Zig Zag Keg Hip Carry 4 x 100 ft
- 3) 1 Arm Dumbbell Overhead Press 5 x 3 / 3 ea.
- 4) Pull Ups 3 x submax reps (90% max reps)
- 5) Walking Dumbbell Lunges 4 x 8 / 8 ea.
- 6) Run 1/2 Mile AFAP

Note: If you have a training partner or you are coaching a group, add a few tough sets of partner battles with the tires before or at the end of each session. Mix up the tire battles.

Jumps and throws should be done first or second in each workout, with reps ranging in the 10-20 total rep range, focusing on technique and power. Just because it is not listed below does not mean you can't add it to the training session.

WORKOUT # 3

- 1) Keg Medley: Carry 100 ft, run back & carry next keg (use 3 kegs) x 3 rounds
- 2) Tire Flip 5 x 2 reps
- 3A) Recline Row 4 x submax (90% max reps)

3B) Dumbbell Reverse Lunges 4 × 6 / 6 ea

4A) Dumbbell Hammer Curls 3 × 8 / 8 ea.

4B) Feet Elevated Pushups 3 x Max Reps

INTERMEDIATE KEG & TIRE WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Tire Jumps x 12 Total Reps
- 2) Keg Off -set Clean & Press 5 × 6 reps (switch grip after 3rd rep)
- 2) Keg Bear Hug Carry 2 × 100 ft
- 3) Keg Hip Carry 2 × 100 ft
- 4) Run 1/2 Mile AFAP
- 5) Push Ups x 50 Total AFAP

WORKOUT # 2

- 1) Tire Jumps x 10 Total Reps
- 2) 1 Arm Tire Side Throw x 5 / 5 Reps Ea. Side
- 3) Keg Off Set Clean & Press x 50 Total Reps AFAP (Switch top hand every rep)
- 4) Tire Flip 5 × 3
- 5A) Lunge Jumps 4 × 5 / 5 ea.
- 5B) Recline Rows 4 x submax reps (90% Max)
- 6) Sled Drags x 6 Minutes x Max Work

WORKOUT # 3

- 1A) Keg Hip Carry 4 × 50 ft.
- 1B) Keg Clean & Press 4 × 3
- 1C) Keg Hip Carry 4 × 50 ft
- 1D) Keg Clean & Press 4 × 3

* The above is what I call “loaded conditioning.” Carry an object, then perform an exercise, then carry some more, etc. Above are 4 rounds of carries with clean and presses in the middle of the distance and again at the end of the carries.

2A) Weighted Pushups x 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps

2B) Recline Rows x 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 reps

- 3) Sled Drags 3 × 150 ft
- 2) Tire Flip 5 × 2 reps
- 3A) Recline Row 4 x submax (90% max reps)
- 3B) Dumbbell Reverse Lunges 4 × 6 / 6 ea
- 4A) Dumbbell Hammer Curls 3 × 8 / 8 ea.
- 4B) Feet Elevated Pushups 3 x Max Reps

ADVANCED KEG & TIRE WORKOUTS:

WORKOUT # 1

- 1) Various Tire Throws x 20 Total Reps
- 2) Back Squats 5 × 5
- 3) Bench Press 5 × 5
- 4) Keg Hip Carry x 400 meter AFAP

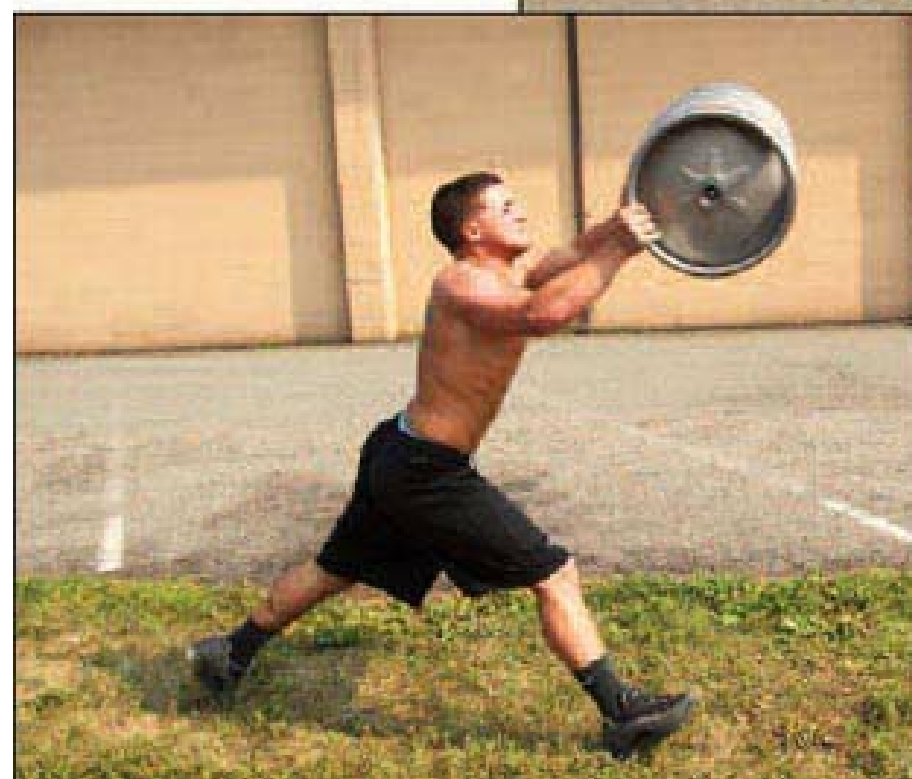
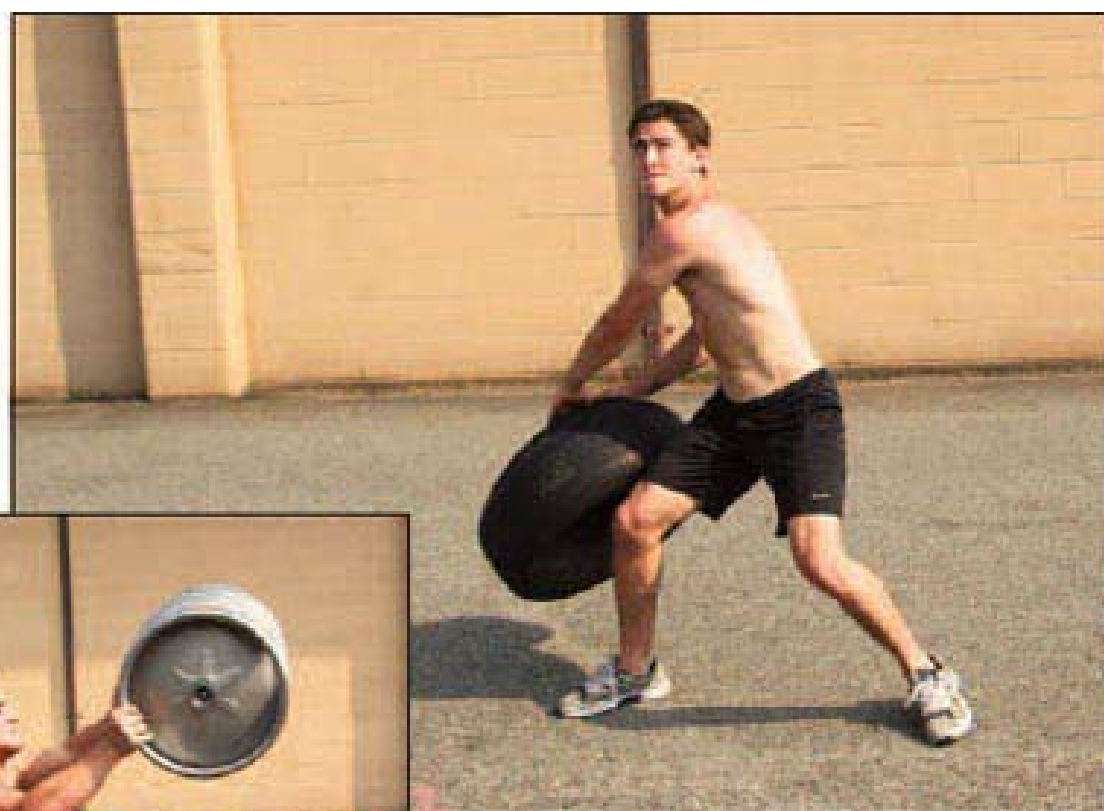
WORKOUT # 2

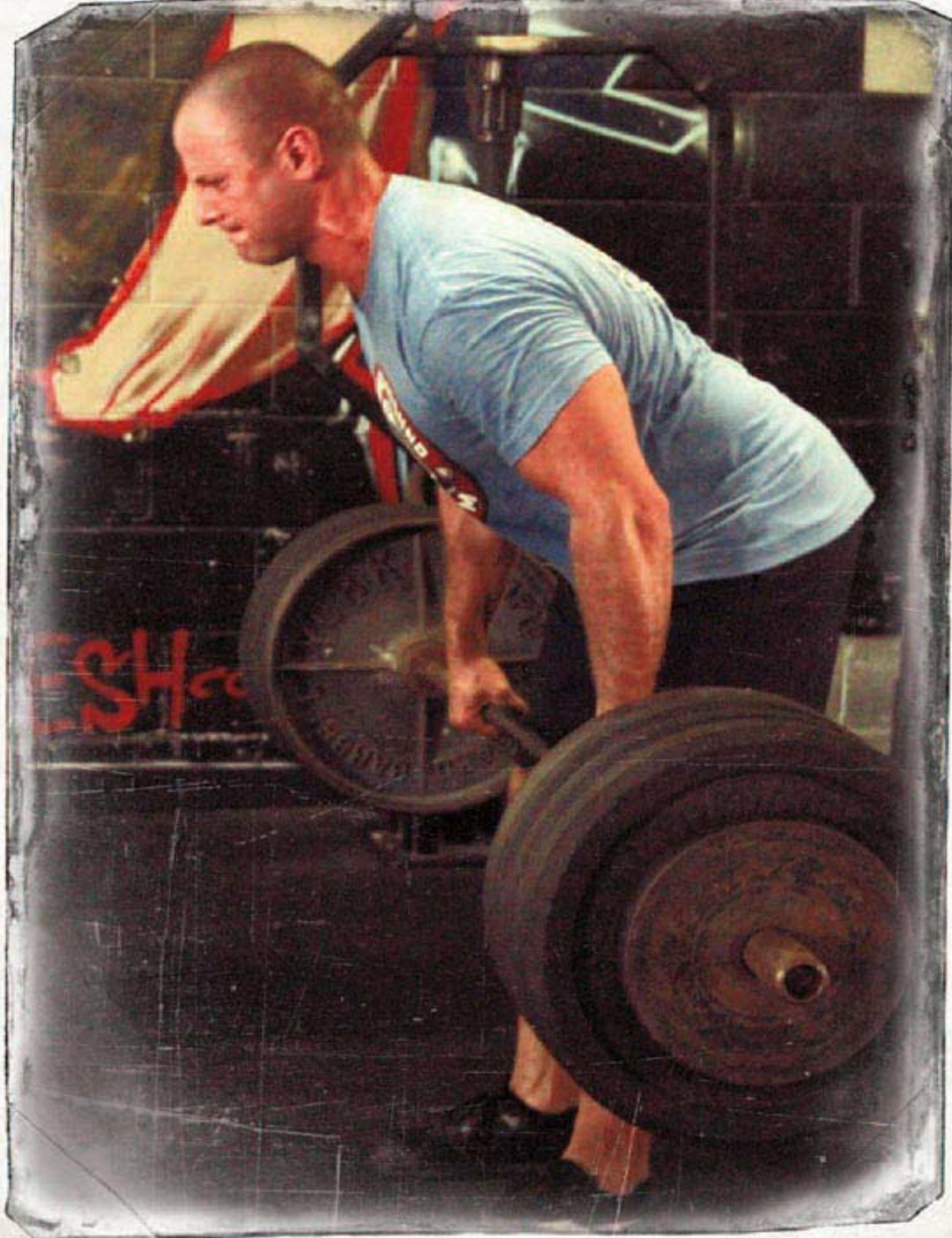
- 1) Various Tire Throws x 15 Total Reps
- 2) Tire Flip x 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Reps
- 3) Keg Shouldering 5 × 2 / 2 ea.
- 4) Sandbag Zercher Squat 4 × 10
- 4A) Recline Rows 4 x max reps
- 4B) Pushups (Switch Variation Each Set) 4 x submax reps (90% Max)

WORKOUT # 3

- 1) Tire Jumps x 20 Total Reps
- 2) Deadlift 5 × 2 reps
- 3) Keg Shouldering x 15 / 15 ea. AFAP
- 3A) Handstand Pushups 4 x submax reps (90% Max reps)
- 3B) Weighted Pullups 4 × 3 - 6 reps
- 4A) Dumbbell Farmer Walk 4 × 100 ft
- 4B) Sled Drag 4 × 200 ft

Reps (Switch Variation
Set) 4x submax reps
(Max)



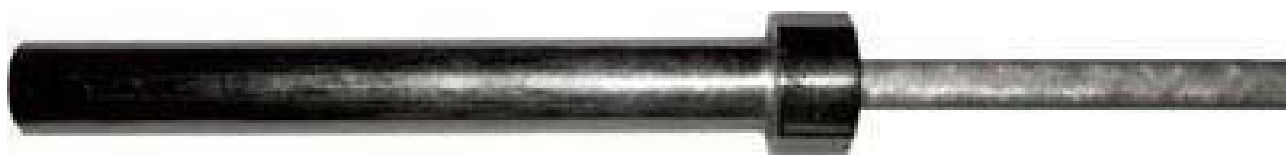


FREE WEIGHT TRAINING

T*raining with free weights has been and always will be the bread and butter of a solid training program. I always say "You can lock yourself in a garage or basement with nothing but a barbell and get jacked and strong."*

"You can lock yourself in a garage or basement with nothing but a barbell and get jacked and strong."

— Zach Even-Esh



I always respected free weights. I grew up in hardcore gyms, and remember seeing guys bending bars piled up with 45s hitting heavy squats, deadlifts, benching, bent over rows, and curls.

The guys attacking the free weights on the regular were the biggest and strongest. My first gym, as you may recall from earlier in the book, was a YMCA in Metuchen, NJ. There was ONE guy who really left an impression on me.

I still remember "that guy," even though I met him when I was only 14 years old, as a freshman in high school. His name was George. He was built like a tank, literally. Wrestling season had ended for me, and I was fired up to pack on some serious muscle after spending an entire season getting my ass kicked. I became a member of The Y immediately, and the membership was a whopping 5 bucks a month! I rode my bike there 6 days a week, following Arnold's workouts.

 *Back then (1990), the YMCA was ending the era of "old school." When I think about it, I get emotional. The fancy Y of today isn't helping to develop stronger, tougher, and bigger athletes. The invasion of pretty boy bodybuilding was about to begin,*

unfortunately.

Believe it or not, back in 1990, The Metuchen Y was very much like the Y that Golden Era greats trained out of, like Dave Draper did when he was a Jersey boy. Back in the 70s and 80s, the YMCA was known for having dungeon-like gyms where bodybuilding and powerlifting greats emerged. Things are certainly different today.

I remember AC/DC being played LOUD on the portable radio tape recorder. Yep, I am THAT old; I used to listen to cassette tapes!

I would ask the guys lifting if I could play my cassette tapes. They ran the weight room, not lil' 135 lb me. George was the biggest guy in the Y and, most importantly, the strongest guy in the weight room. George made decisions such as the music choice first and foremost. After that, if George wasn't around, the unspoken rule was to ask the biggest, strongest guy in the gym first if you can play your tape on the radio.

Everyone else in the Y followed the traditional rules of lifting except George. George never followed the rules. He did what was good for him, and we all should have been paying attention to him rather than admiring how strong and jacked he was.

Looking back, I realize that George simply learned what his body wanted and gave it exactly that. Instead of reading the fabricated workouts in the muscle magazines, George did what he knew was best for developing a body as solid as a Mack Truck.

George trained old school—free weight and bodyweight basics all the way

His traps pushed the limits of his sweatshirt and his neck pressed against his collar. His chest and shoulders protruded like boulders under a shirt. I had heard about "boulder shoulders" and chest muscle big enough for a glass of water to stand on them, but this was the first time I had ever seen them. George's shirt sleeves tried to hang on for dear life as his arms stretched through.

No one else was that big or that strong. All I could think about was being as strong as George. Every exercise he did was heavier than everyone else could muster. If he did triceps pushdowns, he always used the entire stack and then added an extra 45 lb plate pinned to

the stack. Dips and chins were always done with a weight belt. Benching and deadlifts were performed with 45s and 25s mostly. When everyone else was benching 135 - 225, George was repping out with 315, not just for one set, but for countless sets lasting at least 30 minutes!

I frequently asked myself how he could get so big and strong.

Now I am smarter and more knowledgeable. Back then I thought it was from secrets revealed in the muscle magazines. Now I know the truth. It boils down to hard



freaking work on the BASICS. Lift heavy, work hard, train with consistency, and eat lots of high quality foods.

Today is similar to 1990 in one respect—too many people are looking for “the secret.” If there ever was a secret, I just told you what to do. Doing it with all your heart, passion, intensity and commitment is where the majority fall short. Will you be the majority or will you be different?

Those epic YMCA workouts from 1990 still ring clear to me. I recall George performing 2 or 3 exercises per workout. While everyone else was doing 3 sets of 10, 4 sets of 8 and other BS, George was NEVER counting sets OR training to failure.

I was always asking for a spotter, helping me perform 2 - 3 forced reps at the end of every set. George trained for time and followed his instincts. Each exercise went on for a solid 30 – 45 minutes. He would hit a set and rest a minute on average.

I will never forget showing up to train one Summer day, and BIG George was already training when I got there. I went through my pretty boy workout and finished up, ready to head home on my bike. Yet there was George, still banging out reps on his heavy barbell; he was still NOT finished.

In my mind, I questioned my training, asking myself, “Why isn’t George finished training yet? Wasn’t he training before me?”

I decided that instead of leaving, that I would try to do more. I tried to drag my workout on and on, but I couldn’t keep up with BIG George.

George kept on benching, using only a shoulder width grip, moving the weights very fast and explosively. He dropped the bar fast and blasted it off his chest with speed, even though the muscle mags emphasized to move the barbell slowly and to never fully lock your arms out. BIG George locked his arms out on every rep. The plates rumbled and the bar moved with precision, up and down in a straight line. His body never squirmed, and he was the master of the bar. Everyone else squirmed and got pushed around by the barbell. Not BIG George.

I almost let my big mouth open to talk to George about the Weider continuous tension principle after he finished his set. Lucky for me, common sense took over and I bit my tongue. I feared getting my 14-year-old ass kicked inside a spooky weight room and then having to call my Mom to pick me up because some BIG dude just kicked my ass and made me cry.

When I trained at The Y, I tried to learn from the older guys. There was no teenagers lifting in that weight room. They were always playing basketball or in the pool. I was drawn to the iron. My mentors were the guys with the biggest muscles. I did what they advised, be it in training, eating or life in general.

George always wore sweat pants and sweat shirts, so I began doing the same, thinking there was some magic to bundling up while training. But one day, I saw George take his sweatshirt off. He was wearing a Batman t-shirt and his upper body was PUMPED. His forearms rippled with muscles and you could see his chest pushing through his Batman shirt. His arms looked to be at least twice the size of my arms, and it motivated me to train harder.

George was done with his heavy barbell lifts, and he grabbed the weight belt for dips and strapped on a bunch of 25 lb plates. He probably coulda gone heavier, but it seemed as if he only grabbed all the 25s that were close to him out of convenience. It seemed as if his strategy was this: If I see the weight, I will dip with that weight.

I watched George bang out set after set of full range dips, with speed, a full stretch and a full lock out at the top of each rep. Again, I was in shock that he would lock his arms out and not follow the secret continuous tension principle I was reading about in the magazines.

George's influence never left me.



Fast forward close to a decade after meeting BIG George, and it all finally started to click for me. I was finally less influenced by the bodybuilders of the mid 90s and wasn't paying much attention to the muscle magazines.

It was a transitional era in bodybuilding where I saw the guys used to compete at 210 - 220 lbs ripped and now, it was common to be 260 lbs ripped. I lost respect for their physiques and what it took to get there. Although I truly believe to each his own, it just wasn't up my alley.

I started going back in time and spent my time reading and learning more about the Golden Era bodybuilders, the bodybuilders from the 50s, 60s and 70s. Their physiques appealed to me and what was even more inspiring to me was how strong they all were. It wasn't just all show and no go, these guys were athletes who truly were strong!

These new era bodybuilders, who were 250-plus pounds, were oftentimes lifting nothing more than pump up weights. I had NO respect for that. Certainly, there were bodybuilders lifting heavy but not too many of them.

Yet if you looked at the bodybuilders from the 50s, 60s and 70s there was NO hiding from being strong to get big. Many of them performed a blend of powerlifting, bodybuilding, and Olympic weightlifting. Benching 315 was normal, even if you weighed under 200 lbs! These bodybuilders were built like brick shit houses and that is how I wanted to look AND perform.

Rather than following the rules, I began listening to my body and borrowing from the old books and magazines. I started packing on muscle at a much faster rate than ever

before. I became highly intuitive and learned what REALLY worked for me, not what worked for my training partners or other lifters who weren't natural.

It took me a while to finally learn my lessons from George. Although he rarely spoke, his actions and his physique left an imprint on my mind. To this day, whenever I do weighted dips or workouts with only 2 or 3 exercises for high volume, I think of George and what a tank he was!

The man was a BEAST, and he knew what it took to become one. The question was, why didn't anybody listen to him or try to learn from him back then? He was way ahead of ALL of us. Instead, we called George a "freak" and a "monster." Other guys talked behind his back, saying he was on steroids — the common accusation lazy people make when they see a strong, jacked lifter.

It's a shame that people still, to this day, don't get the bottom line fact that getting jacked and strong requires gut-busting effort. If you aren't gonna bust your ass when training you're not gonna make progress.

The complainers at The Y all remained weak and skinny because they remained in their own comfort zones and refused to believe that hard work on the basics is the main ingredient for packing on muscle.

Don't ever lose sight of the fact that hard work on the basics will always deliver results. Always.

Barbell Exercises

Before we dial in technique and exercise descriptions, I must address the fact that you are not to add weight to the bar unless your form is perfect.

I have seen people perform half squats, squats with rounded backs and knees caving in, benching while turning their head, bouncing the bar off their chest, or not even touching their chest.

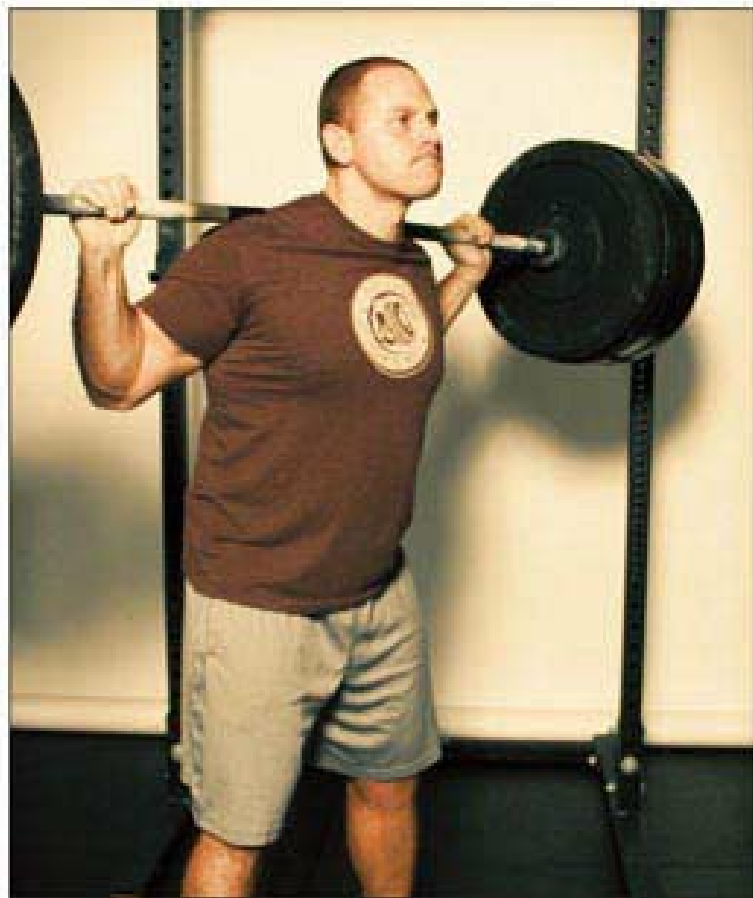
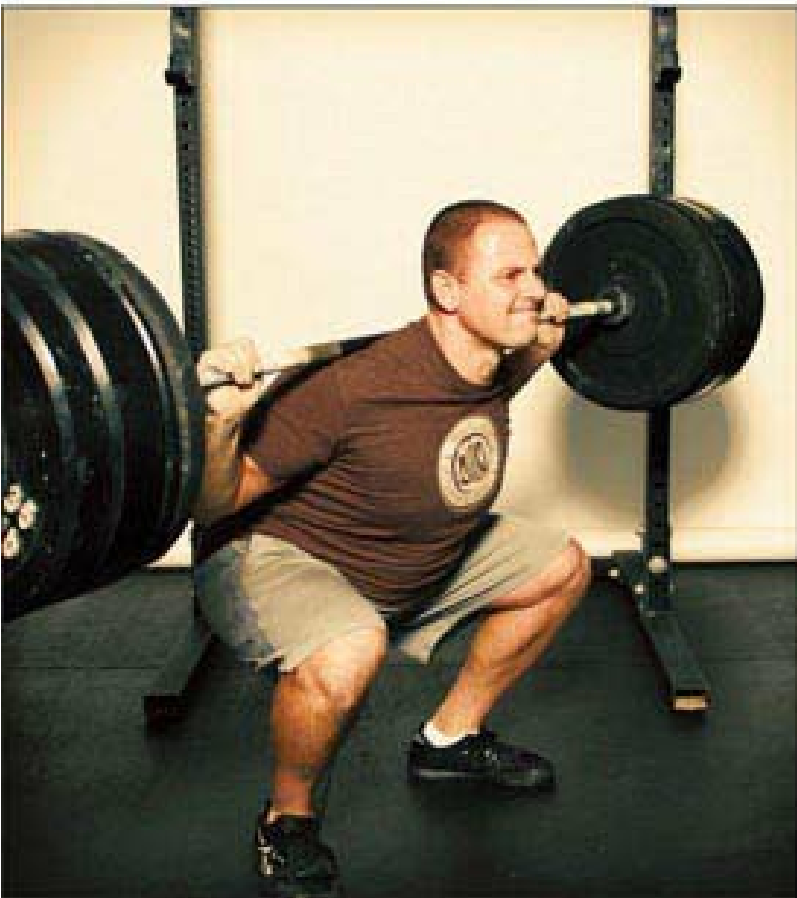
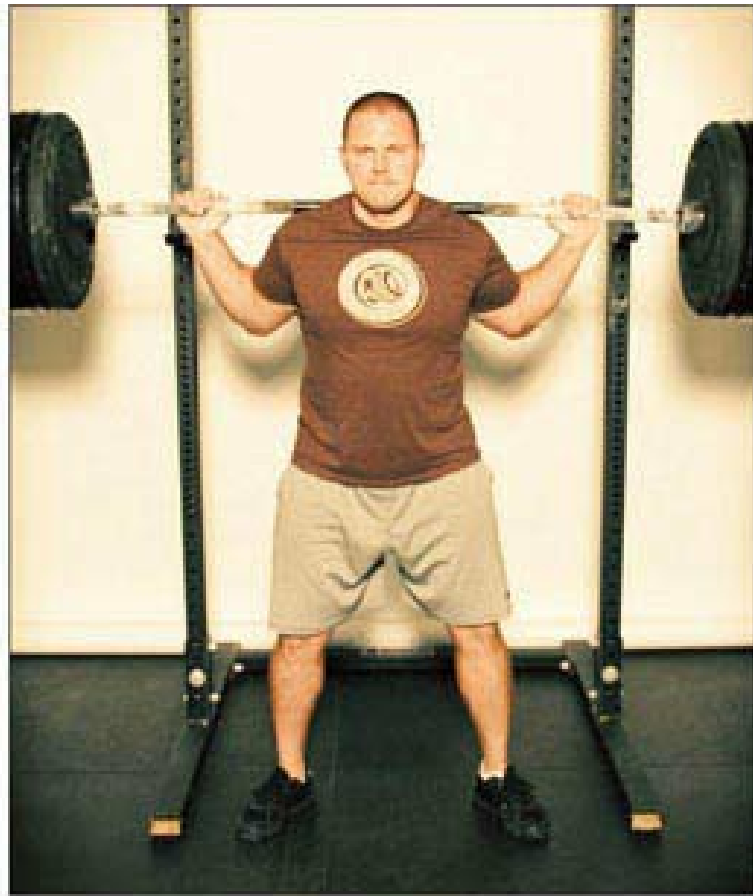
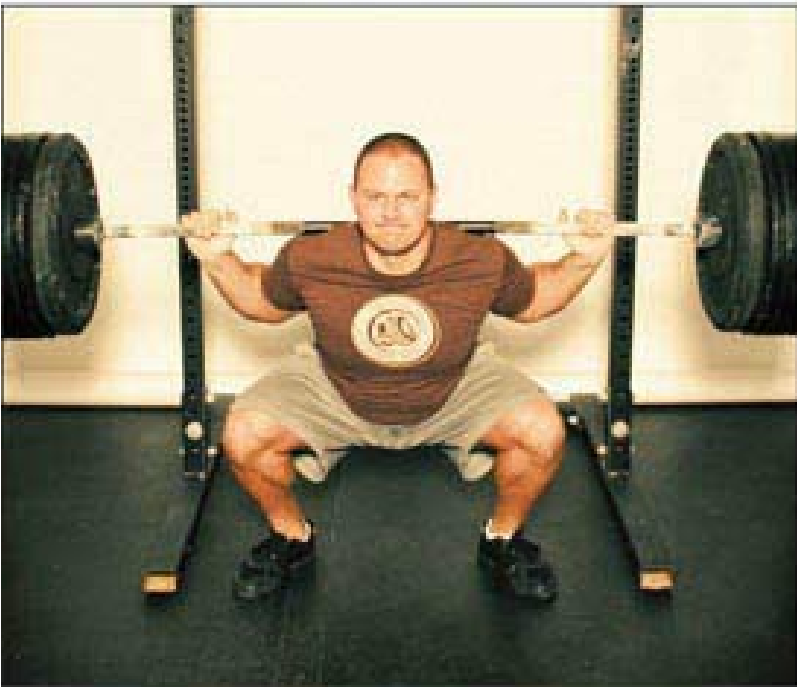
If you can't control the weight, then you're lifting too heavy and you must take care of 2 things:

- 1) Dial in your technique with lighter weights and less intensity. Do more sets of lower reps and don't ever train to failure. Ensure technique is perfect*
- 2) Get STRONGER! If you can't perform a squat, hang clean, power clean, deadlift, bench press, etc then get stronger with the basics. Improve strength through simple exercises such as weighted bodyweight exercises, sled drags, farmer walks, ab work, etc. Oftentimes people are too weak and not ready for the barbell lifts. Build your way up to them.*

THE SQUAT

Squats are straight up the KING of all lifts. There is something special that happens to your body when you throw a heavy bar on your back and commit to getting stronger with DEEP squats.

You can also squat on a box and vary your stance, but the old school deep squat is the king. Box squats are great for teaching the squat and teaching the individual to push the hips back, get to proper depth every rep, push the knees out, and be explosive.



The deep squat requires mobility of ankles, stability of the trunk, a strong back, and a commitment to focus. I highly recommend learning to squat deep from the get-go. Don't get into the habit of training too heavy or too soon.

- *Grab the bar evenly with both hands.*
- *Step under the center of the bar and load the bar on the middle of your traps. Too high on the traps and your upper body will get pushed down, too low and you'll feel like the bar is rolling off your back.*
- *Squeeze your entire back and grip the bar like your hands are trying to crush the bar to dust. Your back should remain extremely tight. A relaxed back equals a failed squat.*
- *When squatting, every part of your body must be tight. NO exceptions.*
- *Take a deep breath and hold your breath when unracking the bar for stability. Take one step back with each foot and then prepare to squat LOW.*
- *Take another deep breath and hold your breath during the rep, all the way down and all the way up.*
- *At the top of the rep, take another deep breath, hold, drop down, and repeat for prescribed reps.*
- *Your feet must create torsion on the floor. How do you do this? Have you ever opened a pickle jar? Your hand twists outward. Pretend your feet are standing on pickle jars and you want to open the pickle jar. This torsion will activate your hips, glutes, and entire lower body all the way down to your feet.*
- *Learn to use your entire body while squatting. No matter what squat variation you use, create torsion, be tight and hold your breath during the rep to maintain trunk stability.*
- *If you are having difficulty with squatting below parallel, work on ankle mobility as well as going a little lighter to focus on technique.*

PAUSE SQUATS

These are great for training your body to squat below parallel and to maintain an upright torso. When squatting, the chest should always remain tall. You can sink to the very bottom of the squat and then exhale at the bottom to drop even lower. Hold the bottom for 3 seconds and explode upward.

These are an excellent method for not only improving squat depth but also for blasting through sticking points.

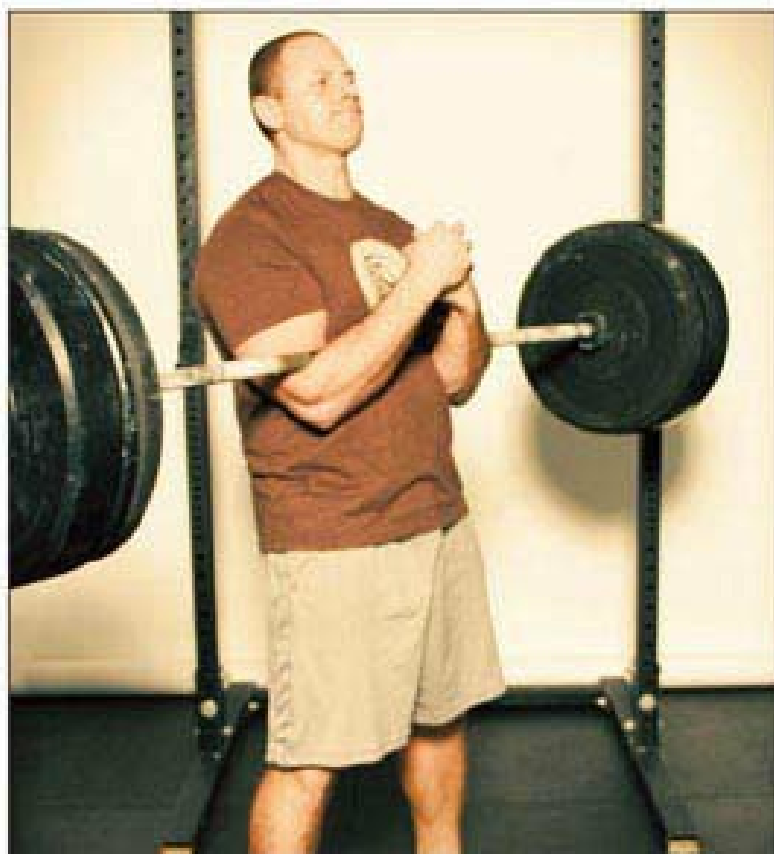
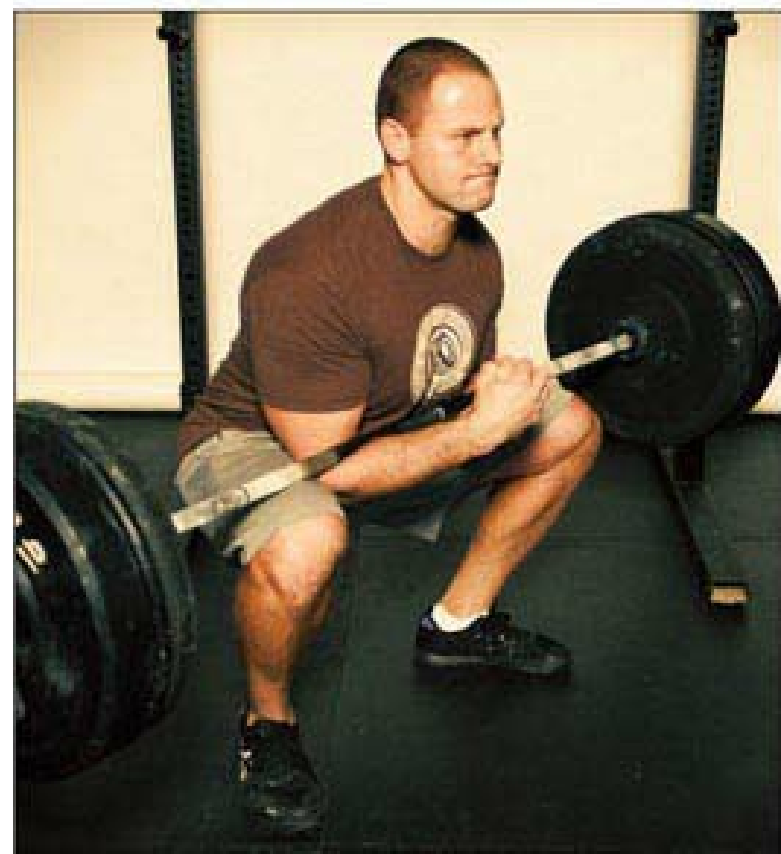
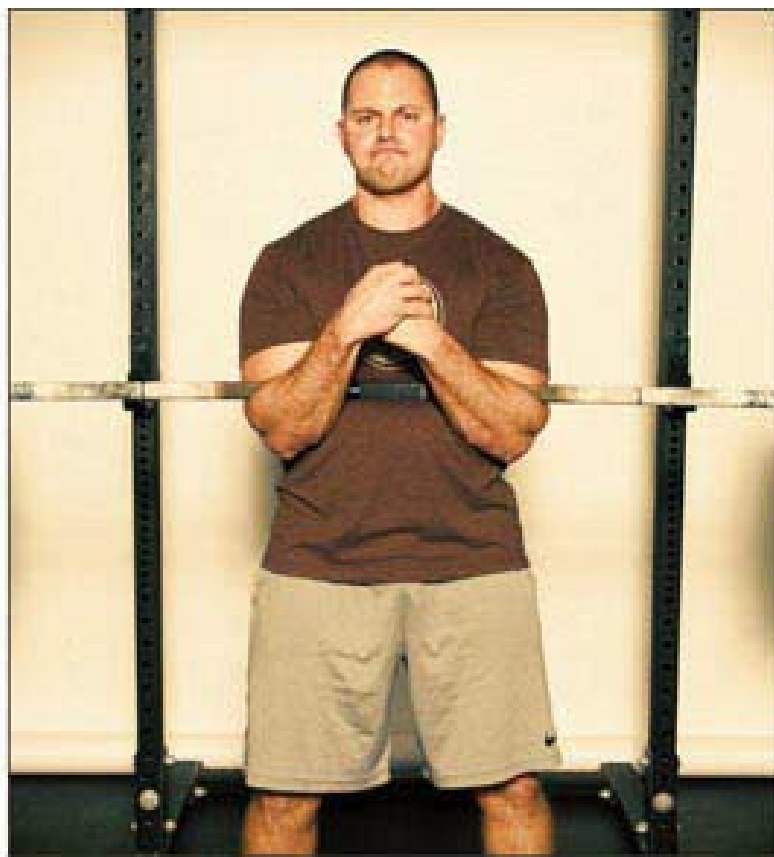
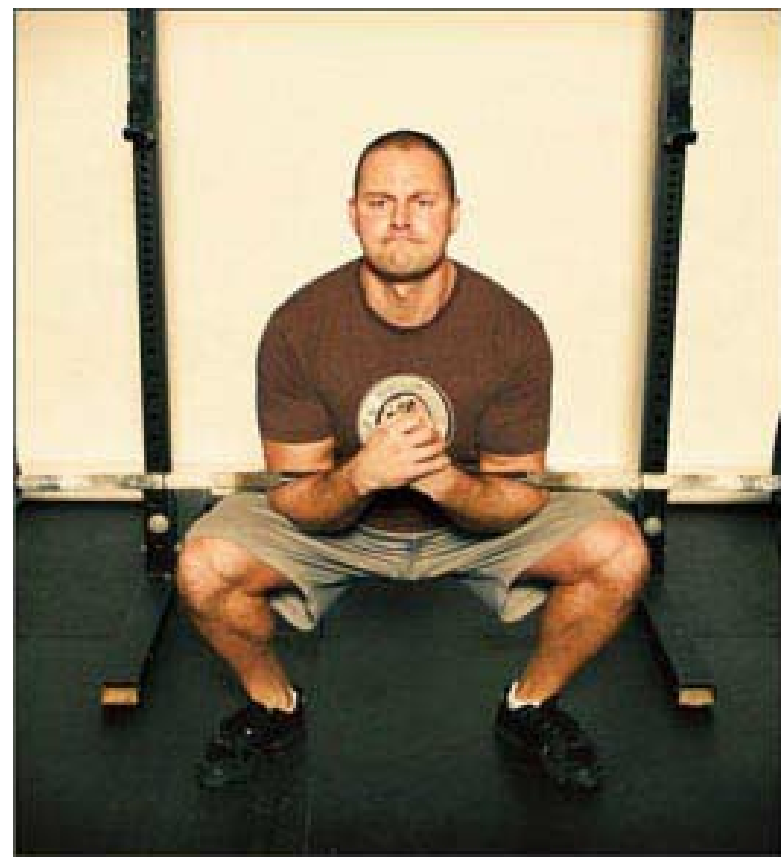
ZERCHER SQUATS

Zercher squats have been one of my favorite squat variations since the day I learned about them. I felt the power behind them when I began carrying stones and tree logs in the Zercher position. My abs and lower back never felt so much intensity!

In this photo we use the Zercher squat with a barbell, but my preference is to use a thick bar or thick zig zag bar. The thicker bar fits better in the crook of your elbows.

Like all other squats, keep your chest tall, knees out and hips back. As the bar gets

heavier your hands will drop slightly, still, your goal is to keep your hands up high so the bar doesn't rest on your quads in the bottom of the squat.



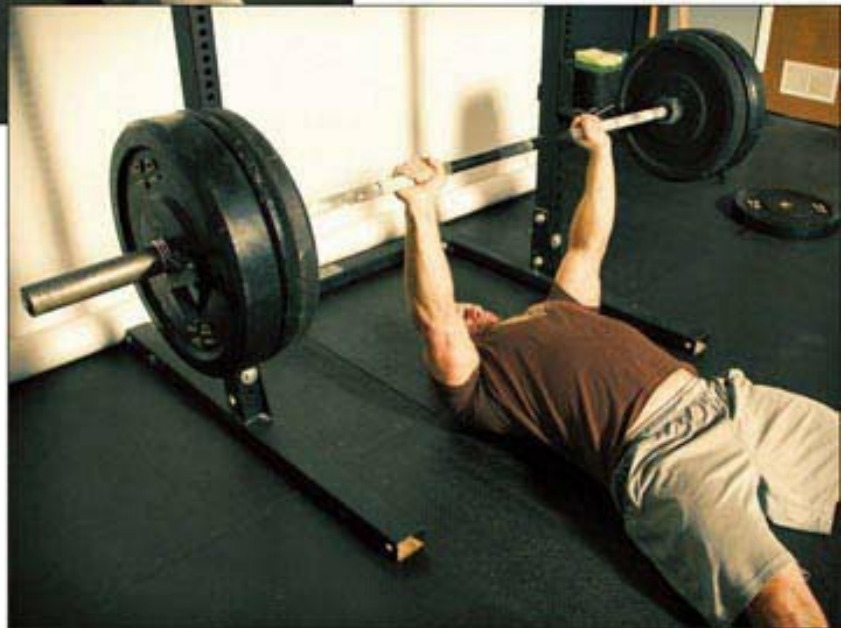
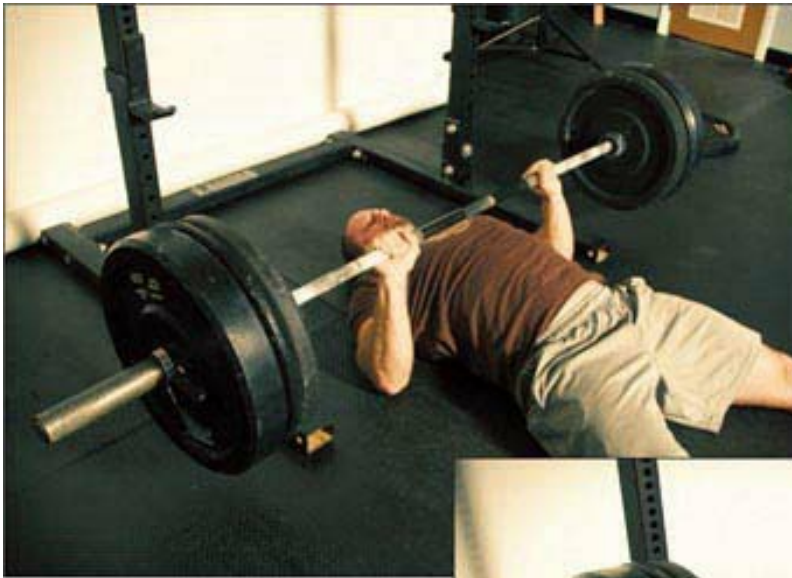
FLOOR PRESS

The floor press forces you to lower the bar under control. If you go down too fast or try

to bounce off the floor you can injure yourself quite seriously. Unrack the bar and mimic the same technique as you would during the bench press:

- *Shoulder blades should be grabbing the floor.*
- *Elbows tucked in and the back stays flat.*
- *Medium width grip on the bar.*
- *Legs can be straight or bent, the key is to keep your butt and back on the floor.*
- *For added shoulder health, place a padded mat on the floor so your shoulders can move smoothly vs. digging into a hard floor.*

Lower the bar in line with your sternum, allow the triceps to gently touch the floor and then blast the bar to lock out.

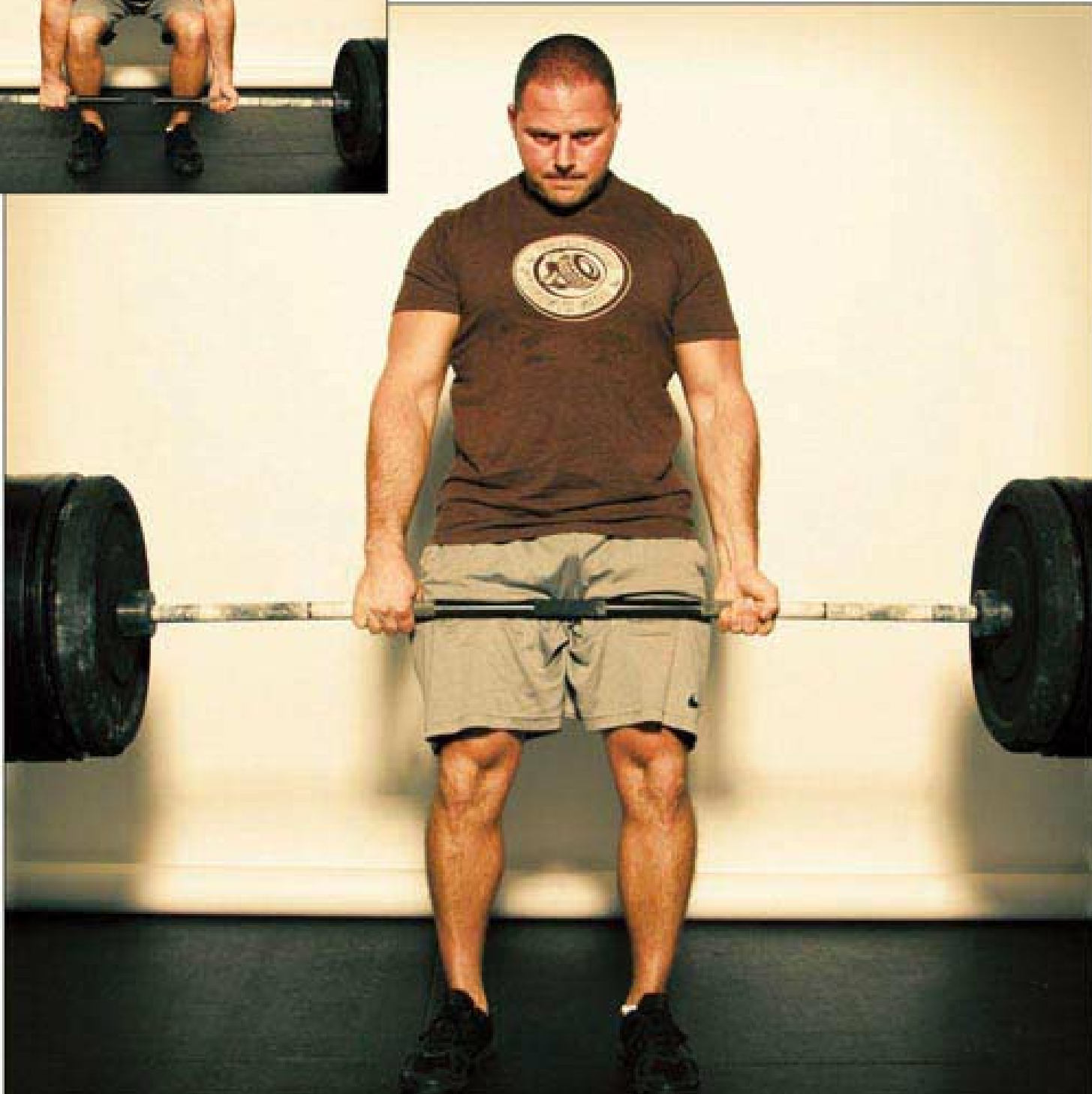
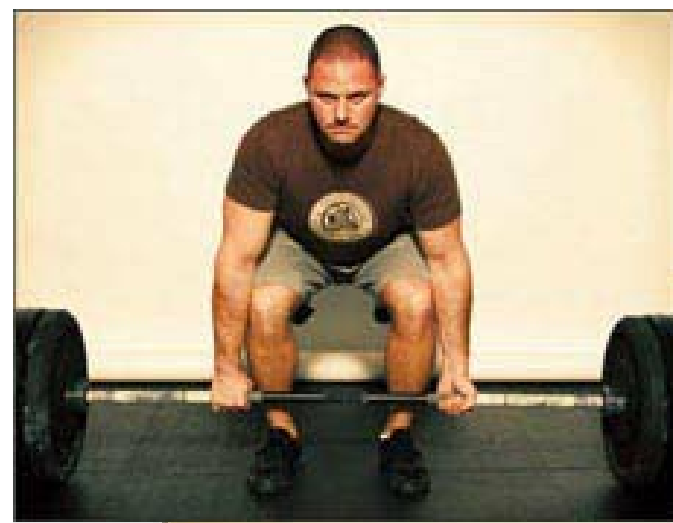


DEADLIFT

Keep your stance slightly inside shoulder width and your shins close to the bar. Grab the bar with your arms against your lower legs and hold the bar with an over - under grip.

Once your feet and grip are set, you can drop your hips and load the hamstrings with tension. There should be no slack in your arms and your back should be flat.

Drive the weight up with leg and back strength, not your lower back alone. Keep your chest as tall as you can during the deadlift while also looking slightly down, with your chin tucked (not straight ahead).

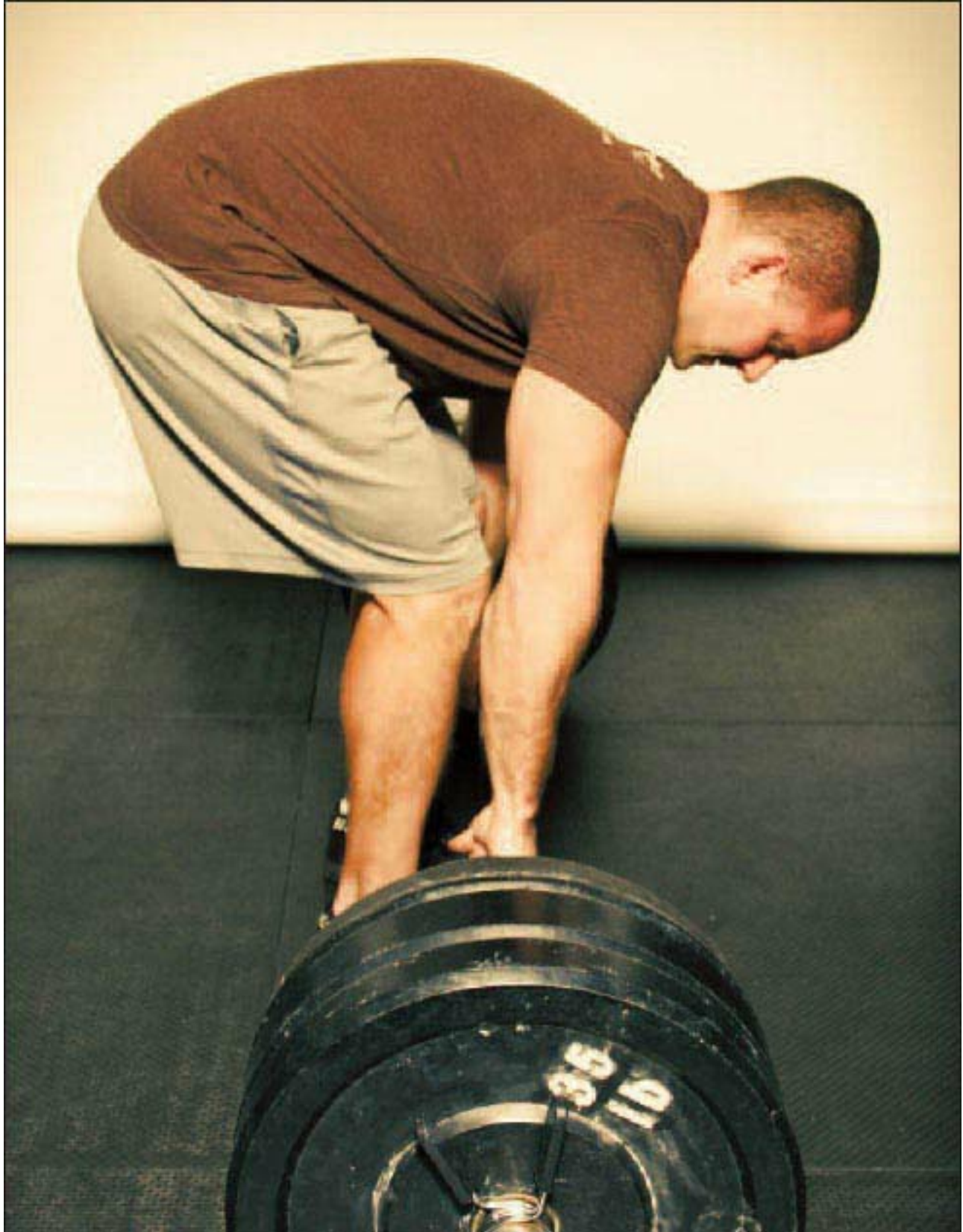


WRONG DEADLIFT

If the weight is too heavy and your hips shoot up before your chest, causing your lower

back to round out, it's time to drop the bar and go lighter. Don't try to grind out maximal poundages on the deadlift unless you're an advanced lifter who truly understands your own body and the limitations.

Keep the lower back flat and your entire trunk braced. When attempting a max effort deadlift your upper back will likely round, but for maximum safety, avoid allowing your lower back to round.

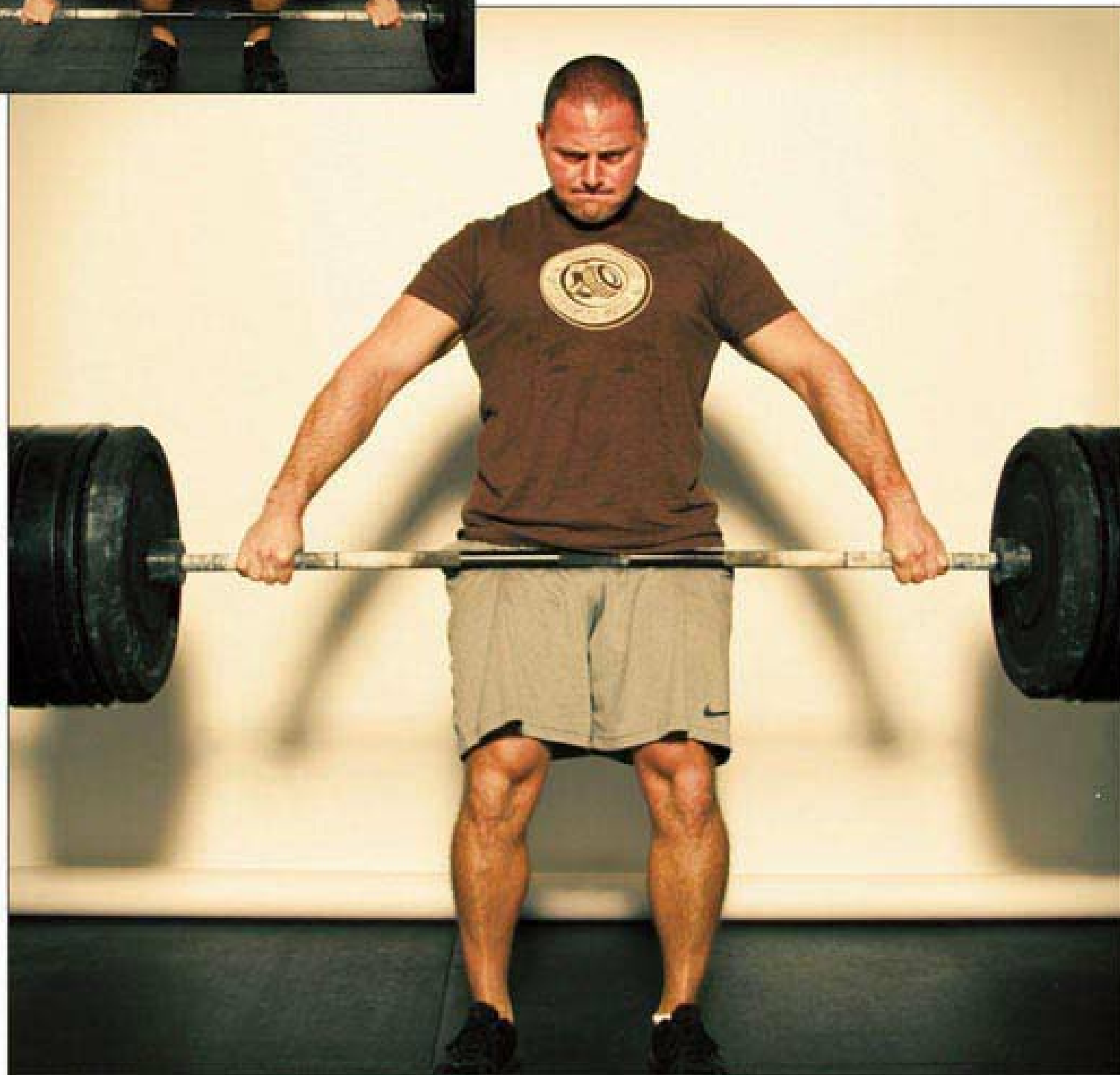
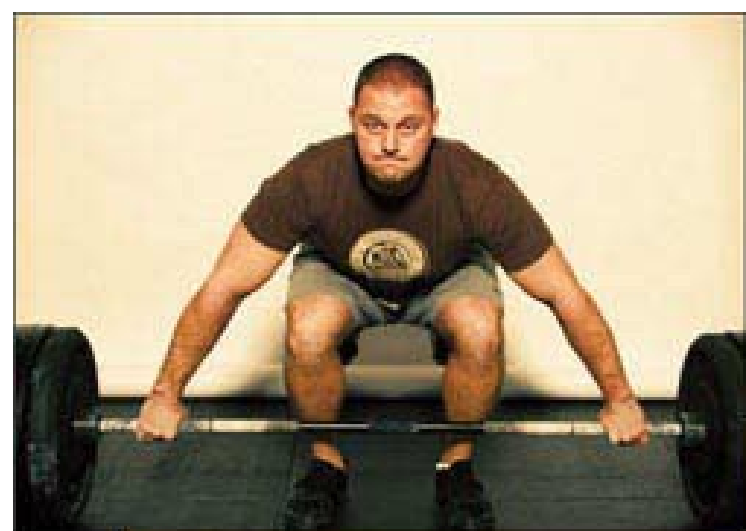


WRONG. Avoid allowing your lower back to round.

SNATCH DEADLIFT

The snatch grip deadlift is excellent for working the upper back and forcing your hips to drop into a lower position.

- *Take a wide grip, almost touching the collars.*
- *Keep your back flat and drive with the legs.*
- *Use a hook grip (Index and middle finger wrapped around thumb) for added grip.*

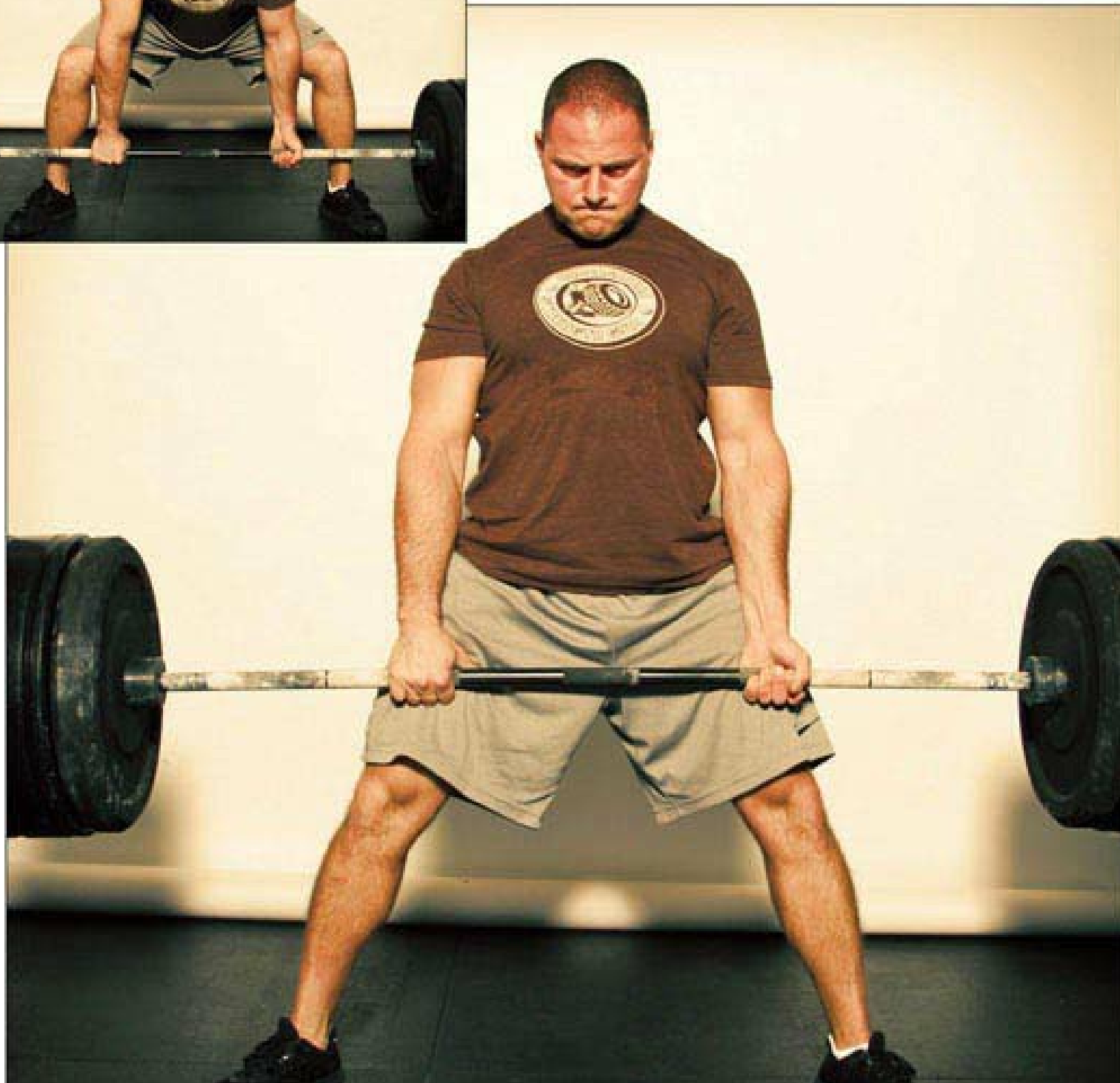
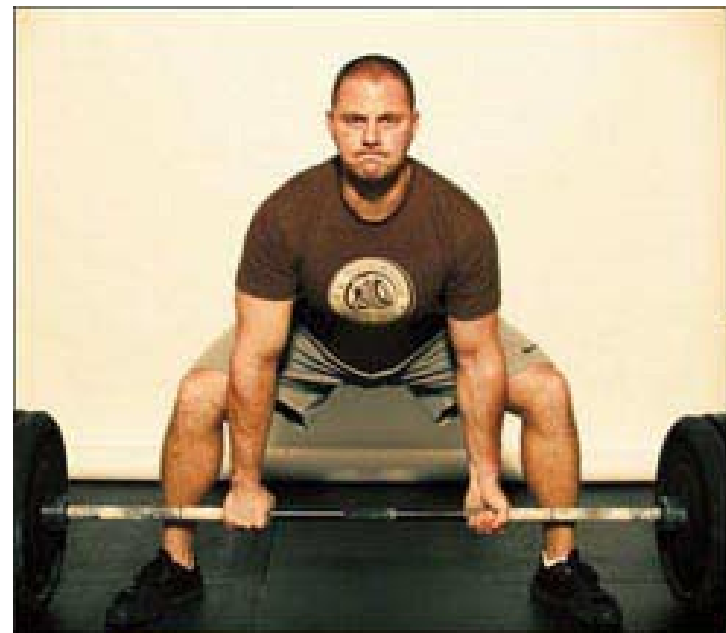


SUMO DEADLIFT

Some lifters prefer the sumo deadlift with a wide stance. I always recommend using the stance you feel strongest in. Not pictured is a modified sumo deadlift, when your stance

goes right outside your hands. This can often times be a great starting position but again, the best position is the position you feel strong in.

Before I close out this section on the deadlift, I want to hammer home a point that will keep you improving for a lifetime. Be humble and be coachable. Don't be too lazy, too arrogant or too good to learn from others.



My early influences have certainly come from the bodybuilders and powerlifters of the 50s, 60s and 70s. That being said, I don't stay stuck in the past, I am constantly learning, especially from those who are advancing themselves and making themselves stronger.

I thought about who I would love to share inside this book about something extremely important. The person has been a friend of mine for a long time, Mark "Smelly" Bell. The topic? The Deadlift and Strength. If I had to tell you to perform one exercise, The Deadlift would be at the top of the list.

Use this information from Smelly to grow stronger in mind, body and spirit.

"Becoming the best at something all starts with getting better."

— Mark "Smelly" Bell

The Deadlift was invented in 1892 by a guy named Dr. David Dead.

This doctor was a bit of a ladies man. He used his strength to physically lift & pick up women in the town who became ill and then he would help nurse them back to health.

Dr. Dead even picked up the heaviest women in recorded history who weighed nearly a ton. It then became a challenge in the town to try to pick up this massively rotund female but only Dr. Dead was able to "deadlift" the women....

Ok this looks like a good place for me to stop making up BS stories and lies. But let's be honest, the fitness community is full of people selling lies.

People making way worse stories than the one I just made up.

It's time to tell the truth and kick it to you straight. It's time for everyone to face their fears and get ready to embrace the concept of hard work!

If you want to get better your going to have to have a good work ethic. To have a good work ethic your going to need to toughen up. In order to toughen up mentally and physically you are going to have to be stronger both inside and out. There is no better gut check than back breaking work....Such as a deadlift.

Right now you're likely saying to yourself, "Wow coach Bell that seems like I have a lot of different things to focus on to get better".

Well luckily for you Doctor Dead lifted up that fat chick and invented a grueling exercise that can help you achieve many of these things all at once. It's called the deadlift and perhaps it should be called the "Deathlift", because it certainly does feel like death.

Some might be saying, "Hey I'm scared to deadlift because I don't want to hurt my lower back."

My reply is "What doesn't scare you won't change you".

It's time for all of us, including the people's coach (myself) and Coach Even-Esh, to challenge ourselves mentally and physically with rigorous work ethic both in and out of the gym.

"If you're not getting better you're getting worse and the only way to get better is to force the issue and take action."

— Mark "Smelly" Bell

Your weapon against these "scary" new challenges is strength.

Young, old, short, fat, tall, everyone possesses the ability to get stronger, everyone. One of the best ways to get stronger is to powerlift and one of the best lifts, the ultimate test of competitive drive and aggression is the deadlift.

With many coaches over the years pampering their athletes with "low impact athletic exercises" I feel like I'm always trying to un-ring bells, re-teach and re-preach the truth.

Here is the Truth: You will always be able to squat and deadlift more than you can clean, snatch, lunge, overhead squat, or step up with.

So the deadlift and the squat then become great exercises due to the very simple fact that you can use more weight! Scientific evidence shows that if you train heavy you are training stabilizers and coordination better than if you are focusing on doing circus tricks with BOSU Balls and other unstable surfaces.

I hear it quite often, "Coach, won't I hurt my back deadlifting?"

The answer is No, you will not, you will in fact strengthen your back to help avoid injuries. You will greatly improve the strength of your glutes which can help protect your low back and on top of that you will strengthen your hamstrings, quads and hips which are involved in nearly every explosive sports movement you can think of.

So, hopefully I sold you on the reasons why you need deadlifts in your life. Now let's discuss how to deadlift and how to incorporate them for maximum results.

It's important that you respect all aspects of lifting and that you adhere to some rules to

*avoid over doing it or getting injured. Here are 3 simple rules to avoid injury or set backs in the deadlift. *Rules 2 and 3 apply to all lifts, not just the deadlift.*

- 1) *Get your hips lower then your shoulders for the beginning portion of the lift.*
- 2) *Avoid going for all out maxes. Just because you can doesn't mean you should. Leave a little reserve and watch your recovery and strength improve. Make sure to only make small weight increases as you work way up to a heavy lift. In other words don't just keep adding 50-90 pounds per attempt.*
- 3) *Switch things up, you can change deadlift variations by pulling from the floor, deficit (standing on a block to increase range of motion) or rack pull (partial range of motion) or the intent (vary your reps & sets).*

How should you incorporate deadlifts into your routine?

Well, I'm glad you asked.

3 simple ways to bring the deadlift into your training.

Option 1) *If you're a competitive sport athlete or you compete and train for CrossFit, you can "front load" your conditioning type of workouts with strength. In this case let's front load your workout with some heavy deads. Warm-up to a heavy set of 5, then a heavy triple then a heavy single. After the heavy single move on to the rest of your workout.*

Option 2) *Many powerlifters have added deadlifts after a squat session. This can help build tremendous work capacity and seems to be a great option for athletes that can only hit up 2-3 lifting sessions in a week.*

Bodybuilders have employed deads on back day and this has helped them build strong, athletic physiques. So with this method, you would use a deadlift on any pulling day which would also include the days you use Olympic Weightlifting if you use it in your training.

My recommendation is not to exceed 3 heavy barbell movements per day.

Option 3) *My personal option, as a powerlifter, is to Deadlift every Tuesday and squat every Saturday.*

This allows me to be fresh (some what) for each workout. Following the main lift I perform movements that I feel will help increase whatever lift I worked that day.

Now it's time for me to share my super duper secret Tuesday deadlift day workout.

- 1) *Deadlift off floor for a tough set of 3 reps with 1-2 reps left in the tank. I refer to*

this as a level 7 out of 10 on the "oh shit it's getting heavy scale!"

2) *Stiff leg deads working up to a heavy set of 6-8 reps*

3) *Prowler sprints - these will blast the hammies and they are great for conditioning as well.*

Keep in mind that this is a snap shot of my workout style. I tend to toggle how heavy I go about every other week or so. I also change assistance movements every 3-4 weeks.

Realize there are two different types of deadlifts:

- *A sumo deadlift with your legs outside your arms*
- *Conventional with your legs inside your arms*

I recommend working on both styles to develop strength from all angles.

For newbies, I recommend doing sets of 5 of both styles as a warm-up. Once you feel your form starting to break down, stick with the deadlift style that allows you to lift the most weight. You can add a belt when ever you feel the weights are starting to kick your ass.

Form is a very long conversation. I recommend that you become a student of the game and check out my web site for detailed videos. You can find tutorials and training tips at www.SuperTraining.TV

PEP TALK FROM THE PEOPLE'S COACH:

Don't be afraid to be different or be afraid to fail. Face your fears. Once you admit that you have a weakness and begin to face your fears then they no longer control you. An unknown fact about lifting and life is that the more vulnerable you allow yourself to be the more you will grow.

Each and every time you set foot in the gym you are representing your family, your friends, your coach and most importantly, you are representing yourself and everything you believe in.

Show people that you are made of something different. By this I am not just talking about throwing around some iron.

The way you're liftin' is gonna be the way that you're livin'!

Think Different, Train Different, Be Different!

Mark Bell

Owner of SuperTrainingGym (www.SuperTraining.TV)



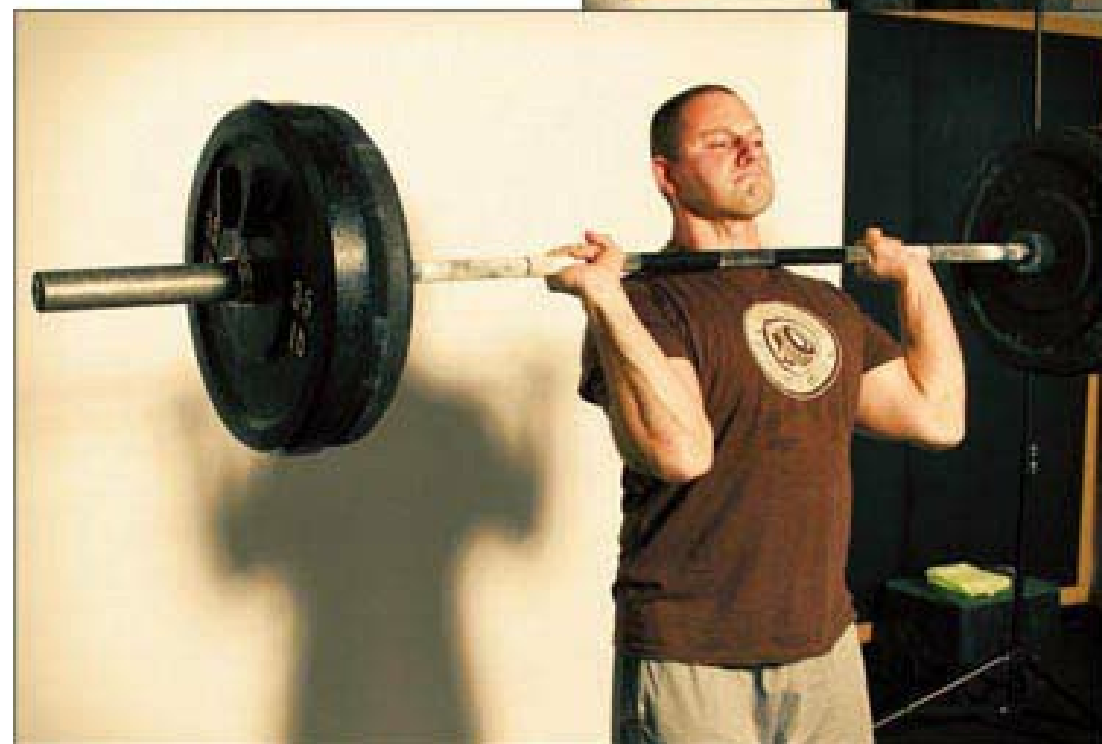
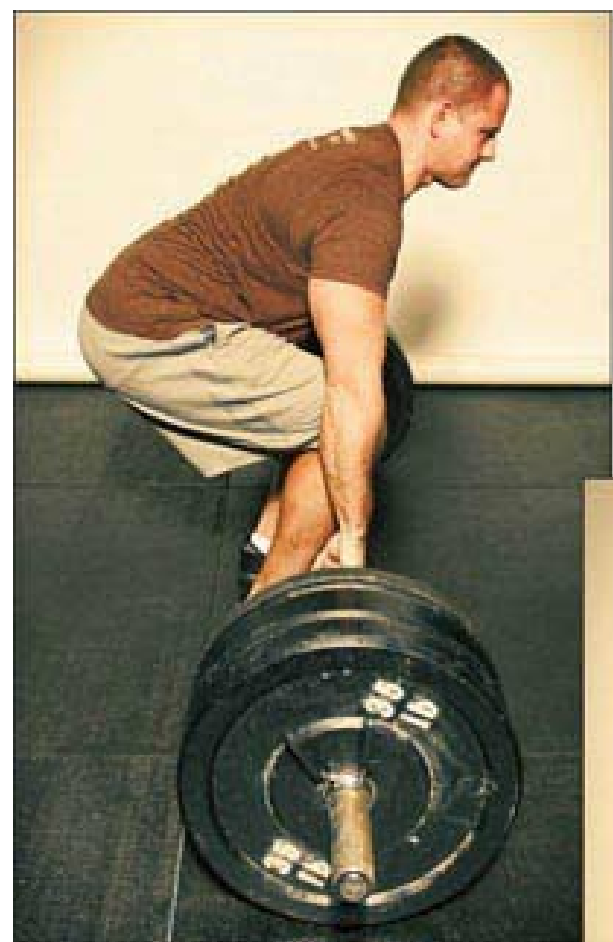
Mark "Smelly" Bell showing the masses how it's done.

THE CLEAN

The hang clean (from above the knees), the power clean, and the muscle clean all have their own intricacies when it comes to technique. Even when I was not trained in the Olympic lifts – more properly referred to as weightlifting — I was performing what you see in this photo, considered a muscle clean. I didn't wait until I was a perfectly trained weightlifter. I instead borrowed what I could from weightlifters, and began implementing their most basic drills into my own programs.

Cleans of ALL types are tremendous for increasing strength and power along with beefing

up your upper back and shoulders like no other lift.



When cleaning the weight, make sure you set your hips back and engage your posterior chain. Do not round your back. I have found that taking a wider grip on the bar helped my shoulder and wrist mobility and flexibility, helping me get the bar to the proper rack position (not shown on the opposite page).

If safety allows, you can drop the bar from the rack position to the ground, or you can sit back on the way down and catch the bar at the hips.

Experiment with different starting positions, either from the ground or from the hang position. I highly recommend getting expert coaching from a qualified Olympic weightlifting coach to dial in your technique on the clean, snatch, and jerk. Since I have begun learning more about weightlifting and have invested in my own coaching, I have fallen in love with the power and the benefits of weightlifting.

At the time of writing this book, I am 37 and closing in on 38 in a few short months. I began training at age 13, and 24 years later, I am still learning. Don't ever stop learning; this is the enemy of all progress.

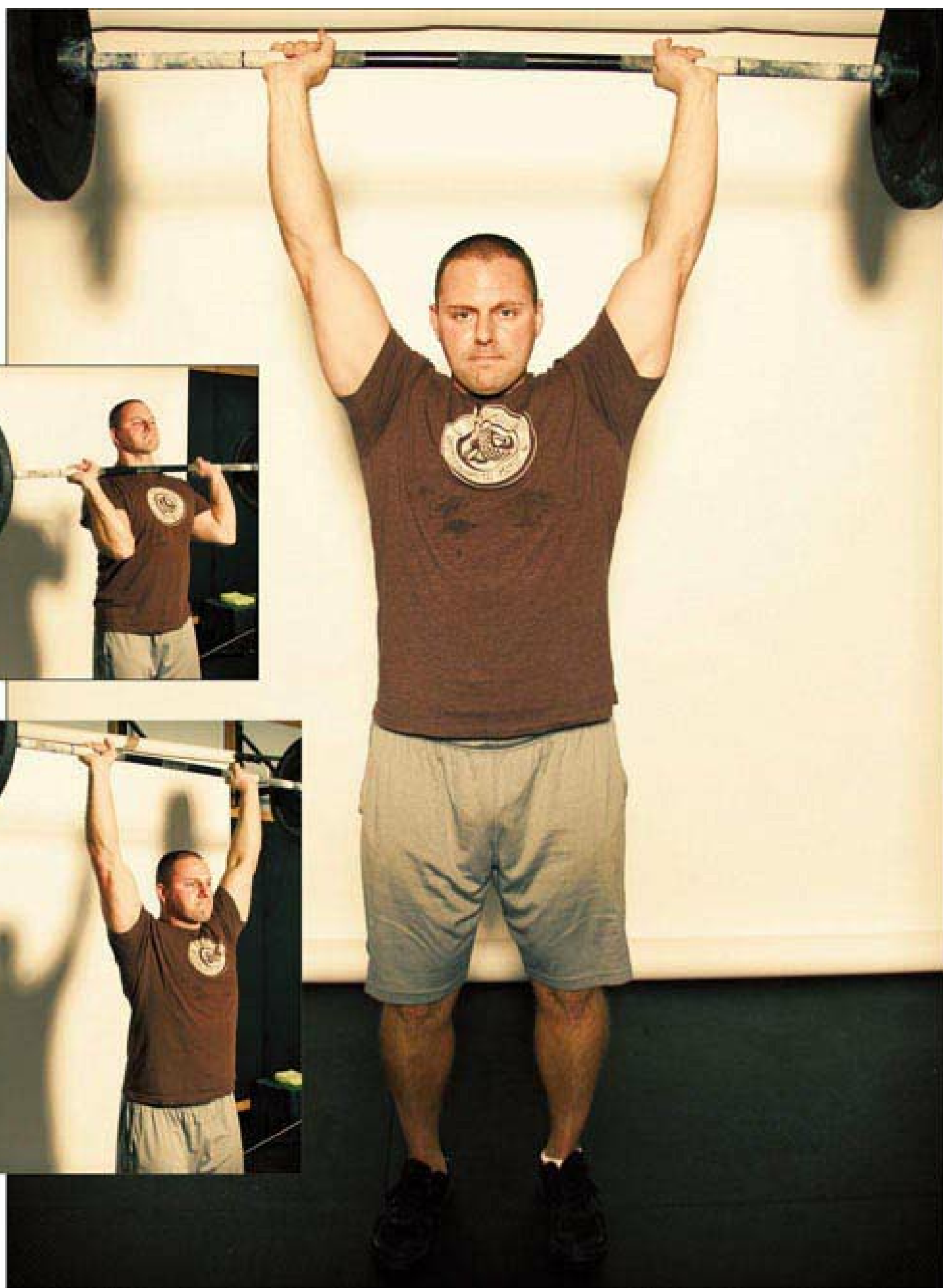
I began aggressively researching weightlifting and getting coaching from experts after the photos were taken for this book, and I truly regret not learning them earlier. As always, lift AND learn!

MILITARY PRESS

The military press is as old school as it gets. Back in the 50s and 60s, the military press was THE exercise that truly tested a man's strength, not the bench press.

I prefer cleaning the bar from the ground before every rep, but starting from a rack is fine as well, and can help you focus on the purity of grabbing the bar and pressing it overhead.

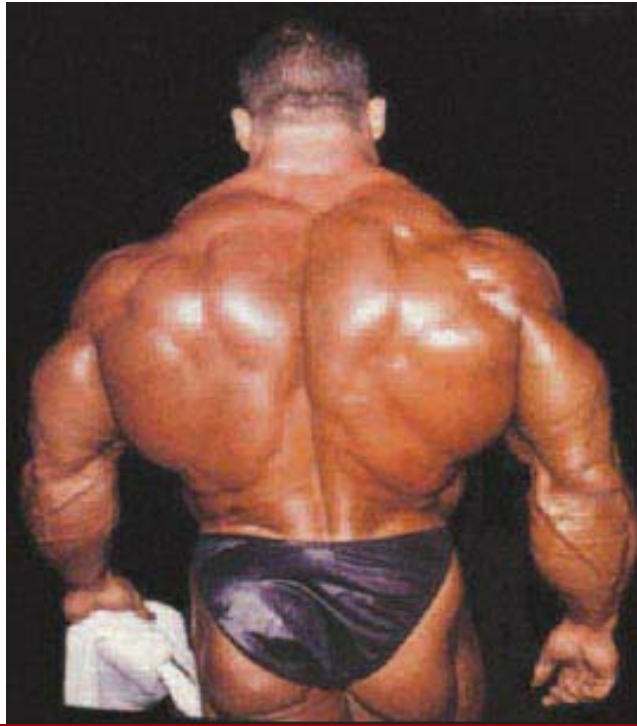
- *Grab the bar outside shoulder width with a tight grip.*
- *Keep your feet close together and squeeze every muscle from head to toe.*
- *Inhale deeply and hold your breath, pressing aggressively to a full lock out overhead.*
- *Lower the bar under control and allow your elbows to be slightly in front of you, not flared out.*
- *When performed properly, your entire trunk, glutes and legs will be aggressively squeezed and tense. Your lats will be engaged, with the elbows pointing forward.*
- *The push press is a different movement and can be done if you dip down ever so slightly with heavier loads. Otherwise, learn the strict press and learn to engage your entire body when overhead pressing.*



BENTOVER UNDERHAND ROW

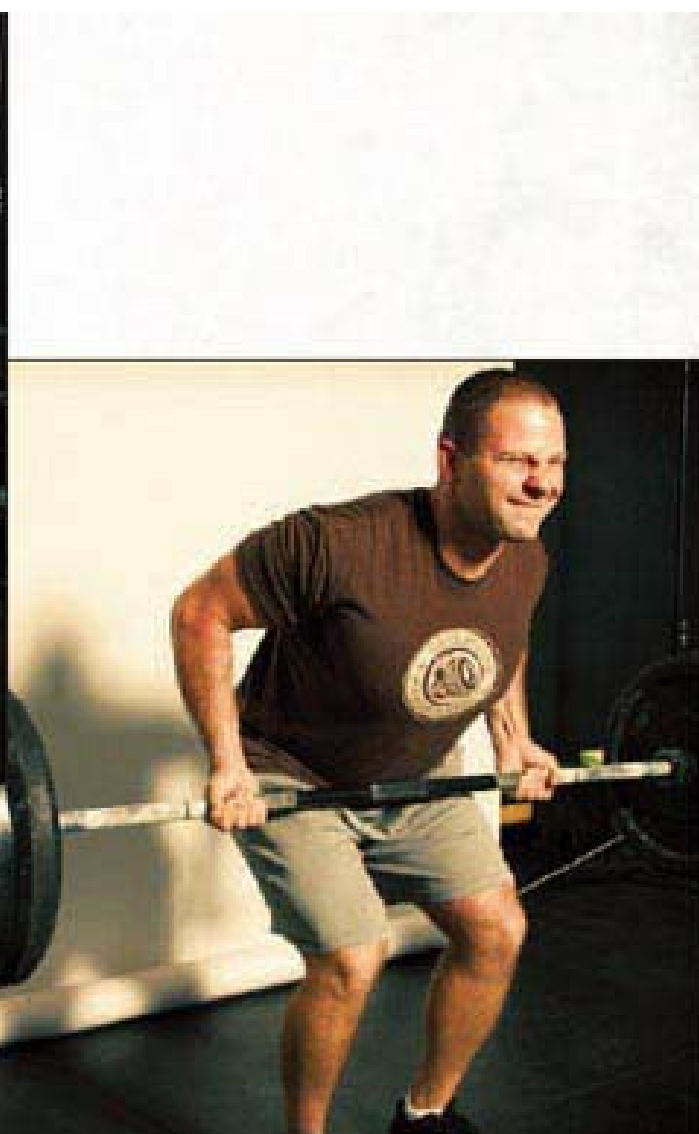
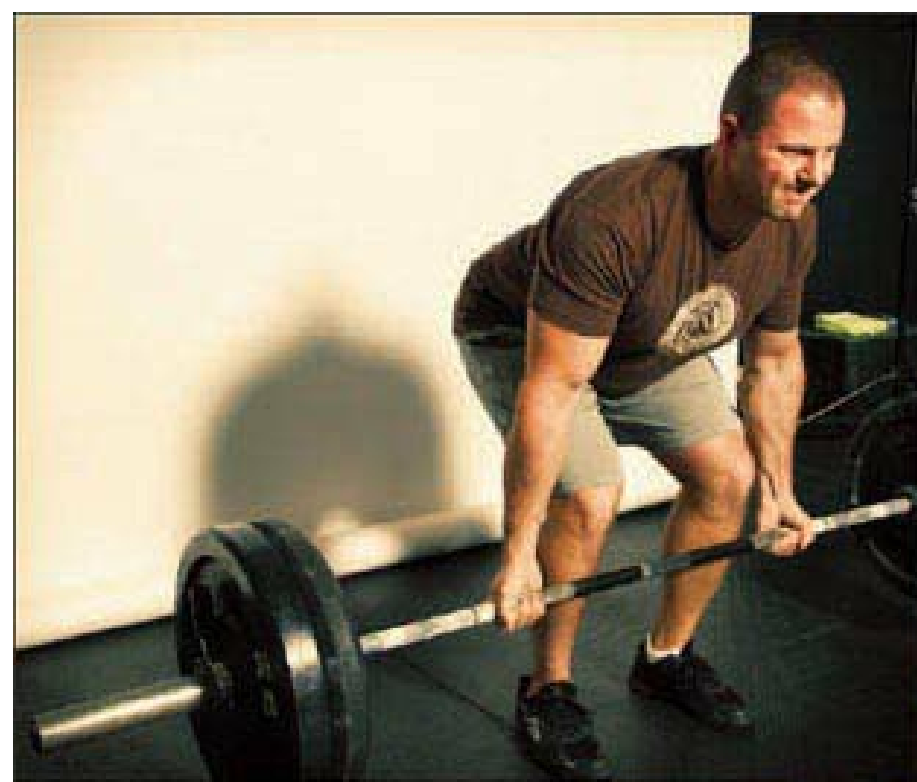
These bent over rows with a curl grip were popularized by Dorian Yates, a six-time Mr. Olympia winner who trained with very low volume, very heavy weights, and very high intensity.

The curl grip places your biceps in a stronger position, and I have found that it also helps people keep their back flat and maintain proper form.



The champion back of Dorian Yates.

- *Sit your hips back and drop your torso so you are above parallel*
- *Yates would lift his torso to a 70 degree angle. This lessened the stress on the low back and helped him move heavier weights in a safer manner.*
- *Squeeze your shoulder blades at the top of each rep.*



Dumbbell & Kettlebell Exercises

I am often asked what the difference is between dumbbell and kettlebell exercises, and which is better.

I don't see one or the other as better. Dumbbells and kettlebells have their own unique advantages. The dumbbells are used for a variety of goals from performance to muscle building. The kettlebells are also used for performance and muscle building, yet the slight differences between using BOTH of these training tools helps improve coordination and athleticism.

I will say that many undervalue dumbbells. As you go through this chapter, I want you to learn and begin implementing these methods, and see the differences and benefits yourself.

Kettlebell training will require skill and learning beyond the dumbbells. Like weightlifting, I recommend you find a qualified kettlebell instructor and receive some coaching from him/her.

When using the kettlebell, we often allow the bell to stretch between the legs and behind the back, aggressively targeting the hips, hamstrings, and your entire posterior chain.

With dumbbells I prefer not to swing through the legs but to remain more vertical. For example, on the snatch or clean and press, with a dumbbell we squat the way down and pull the weight vertically, whereas with a kettlebell we sit back and perform more hip extension than squatting. I don't suggest one tool over the other; instead, I suggest using both.

ONE ARM DUMBBELL BENCH

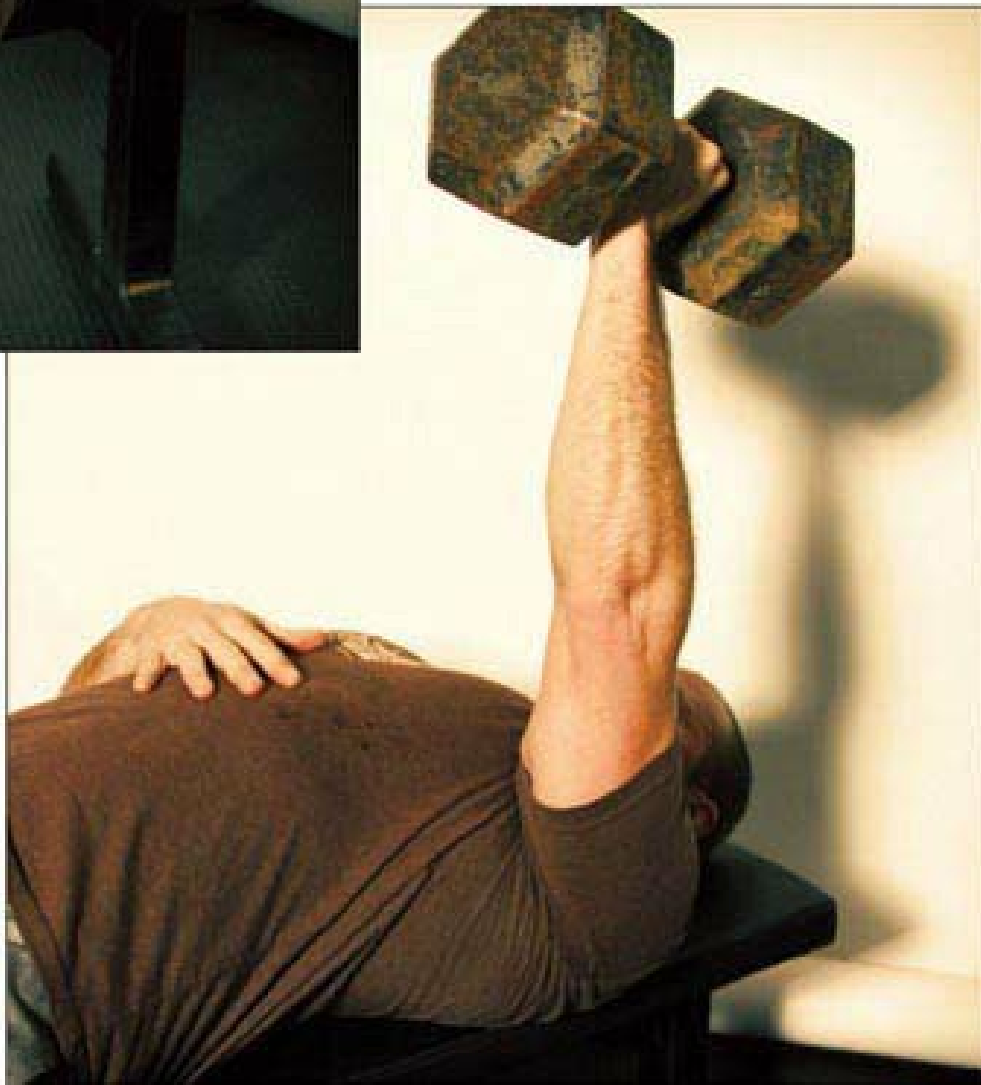
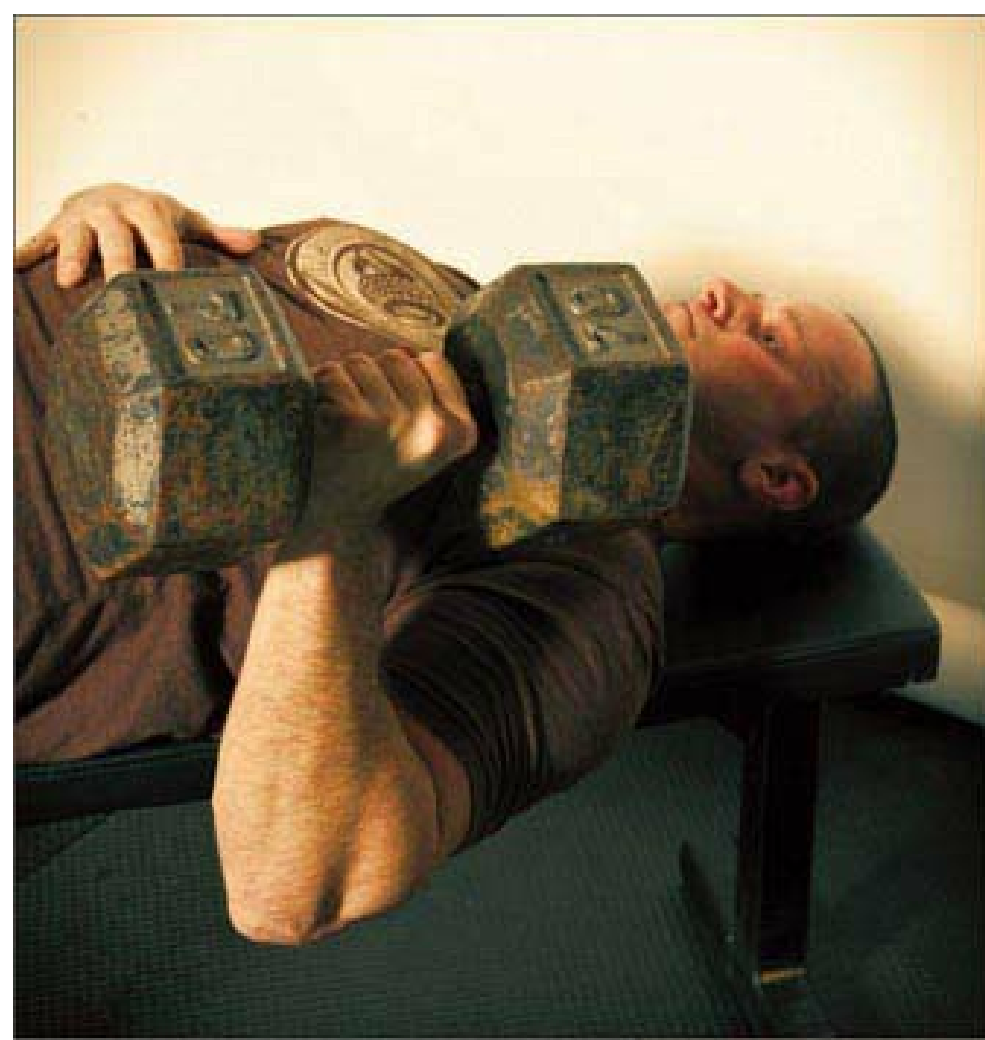
The basic dumbbell bench is excellent for developing muscle and strength, as well as coordination, by balancing and controlling the individual weights. Elbows and palms stay in to lessen shoulder strain.

Like the barbell bench press, engage your legs by pressing them into the ground while also squeezing your shoulder blades down into the bench. The weights should be pressed straight up and down. If the dumbbells are swaying or pulling you around, lighten up the weight and dial in technique first.

Advanced lifters can perform pause dumbbell benching as we did pause squats. Pause in the stretch position and exhale to stretch even more when in the bottom position. Hold for 3 - 5 seconds and then explode the dumbbells straight up.

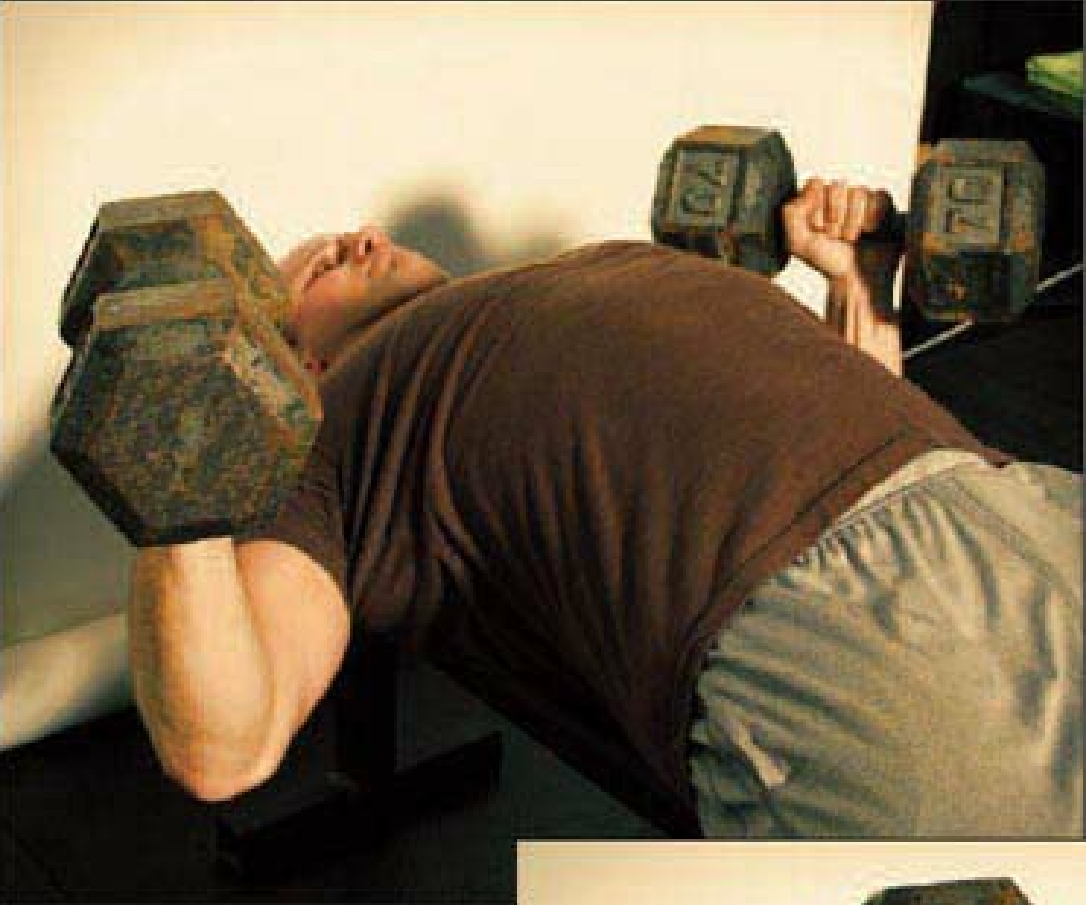
I never even thought about this lift until Coach Reeve told me about one of his football players pressing the 150-lb dumbbell for 10 reps. We spoke about the strength and stability

of his upper body, abs, and even the legs requiring the stabilization while pressing.



TWO ARM DUMBBELL BENCH

I began using this exercise on the benches and on the floor. My preference is to go with both dumbbells and reserve this variation for the advanced lifters.

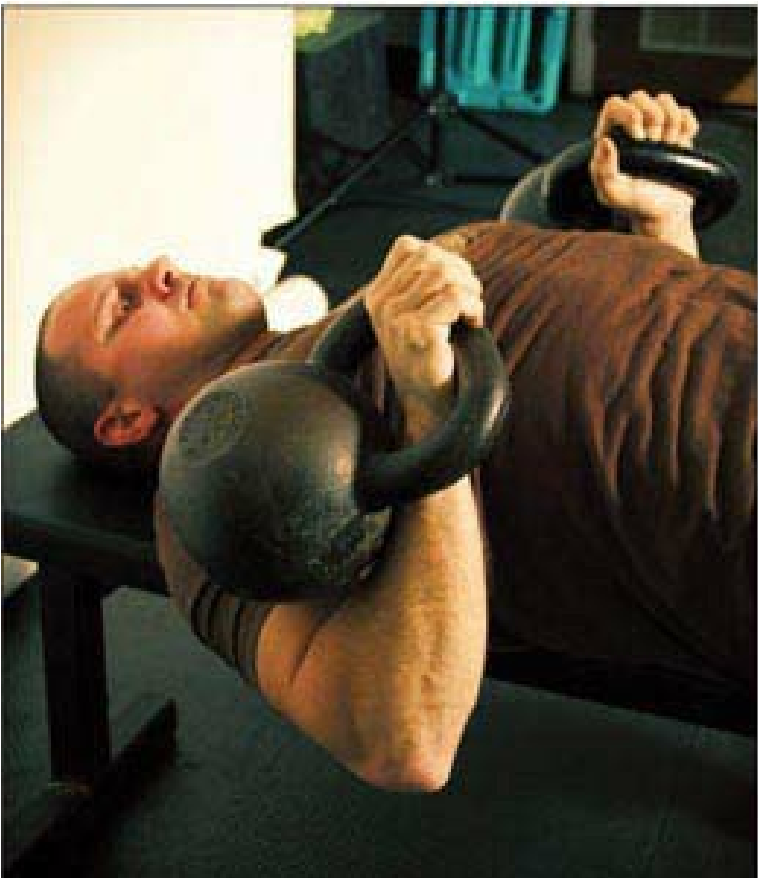
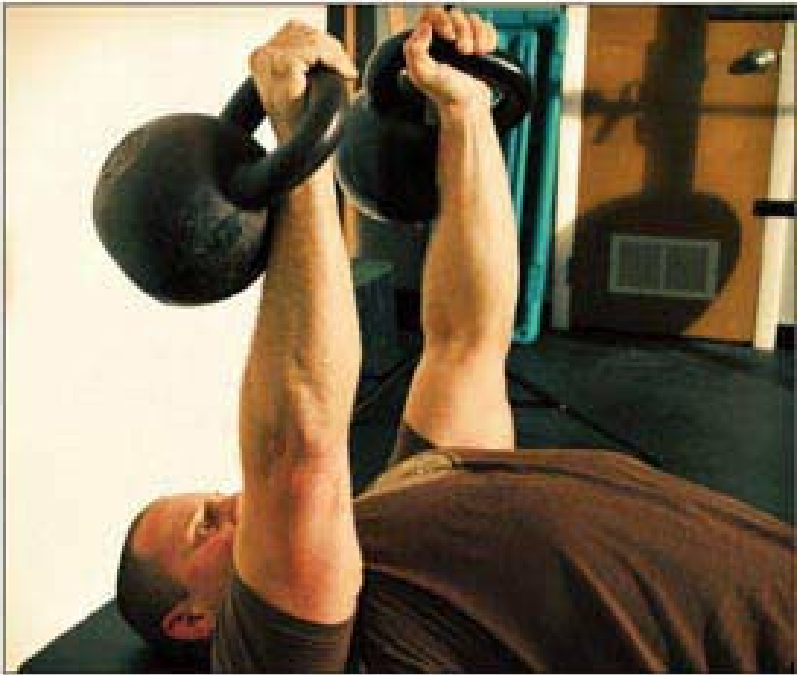
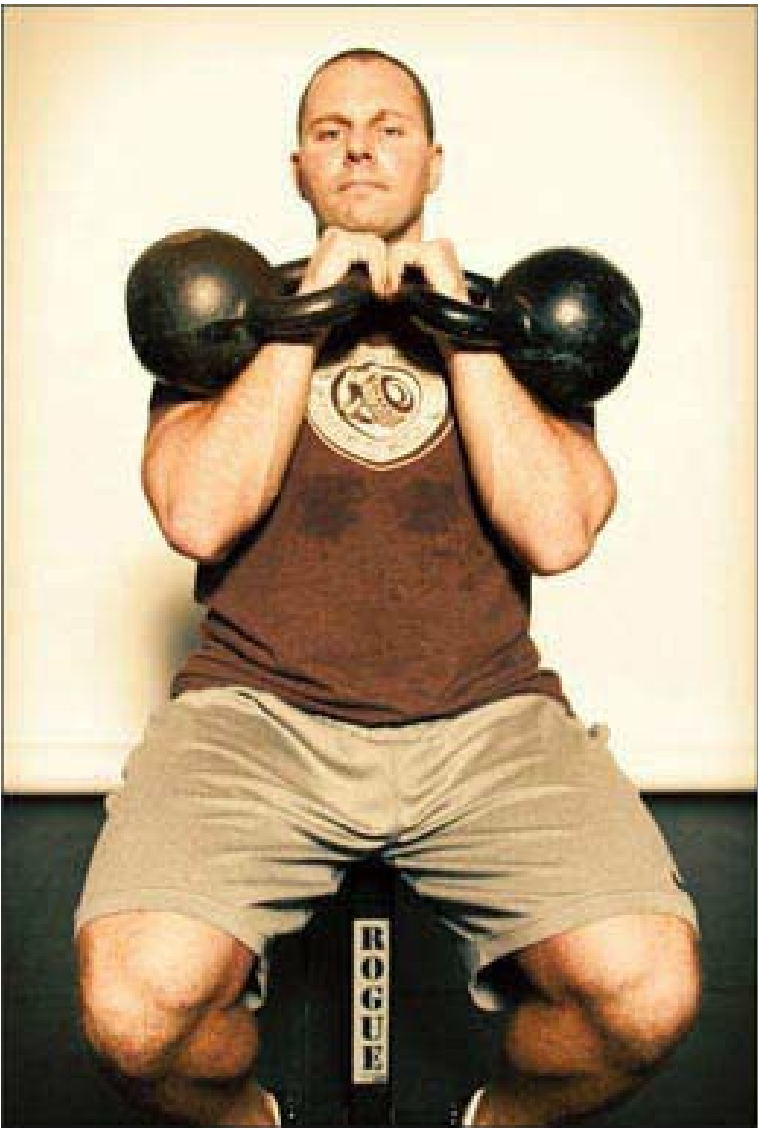


KETTLEBELL BENCH

I was bored one day and needed a change. I decided to go through a bodybuilding style

workout using kettlebells instead of dumbbells. The change in stability was significant, and the challenge definitely shocked my muscles.

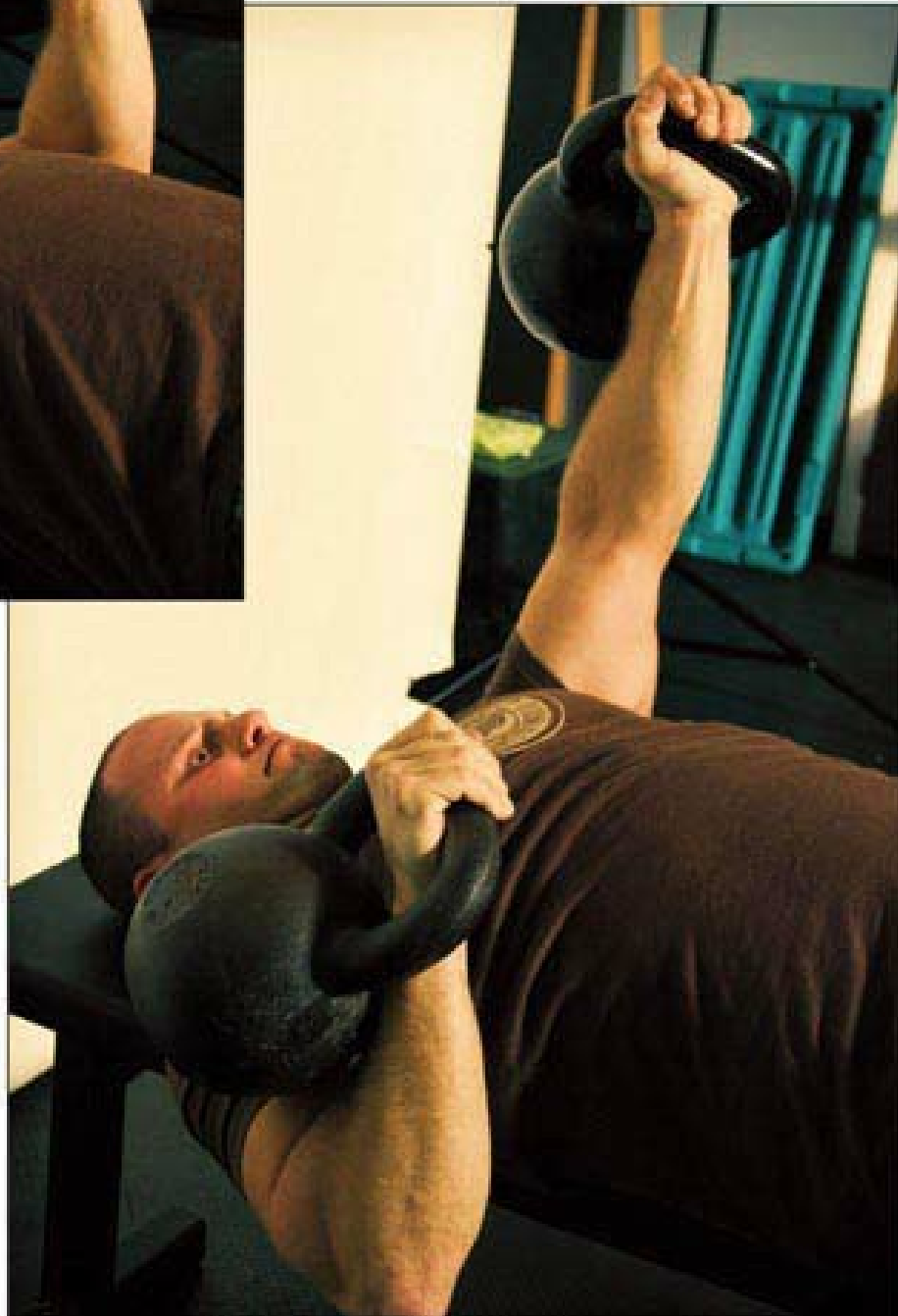
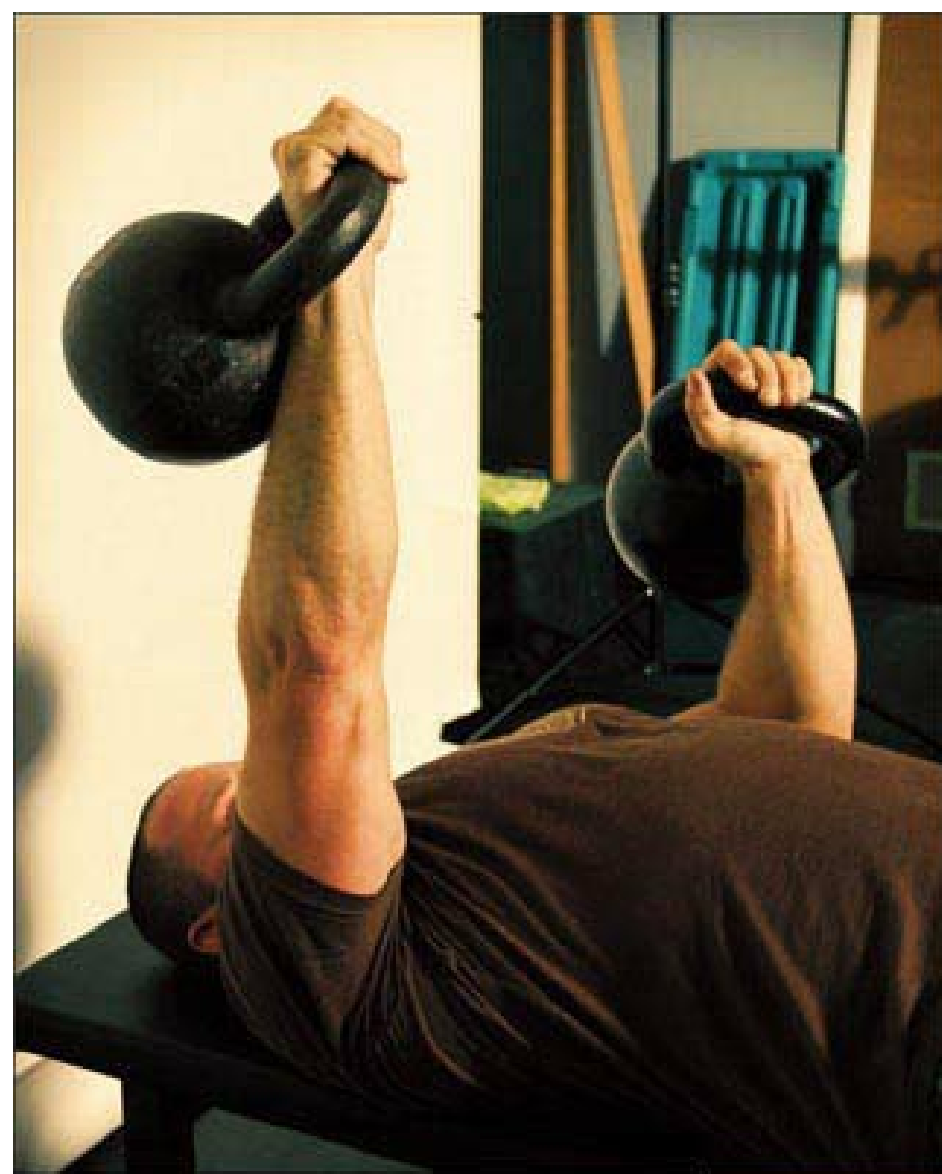
When your muscles get used to an exercise or you feel a plateau coming on, it's time to shock the muscles and sometimes all it takes is switching the training tool for that same exercise.





KETTLEBELL SEE-SAW BENCH

You can also perform this exercise in an alternate fashion, one rep at a time, or in see-saw fashion, where one arm travels up and the other travels down at the same time. Both variations intensify the stability factor in your legs, abs, and shoulders.

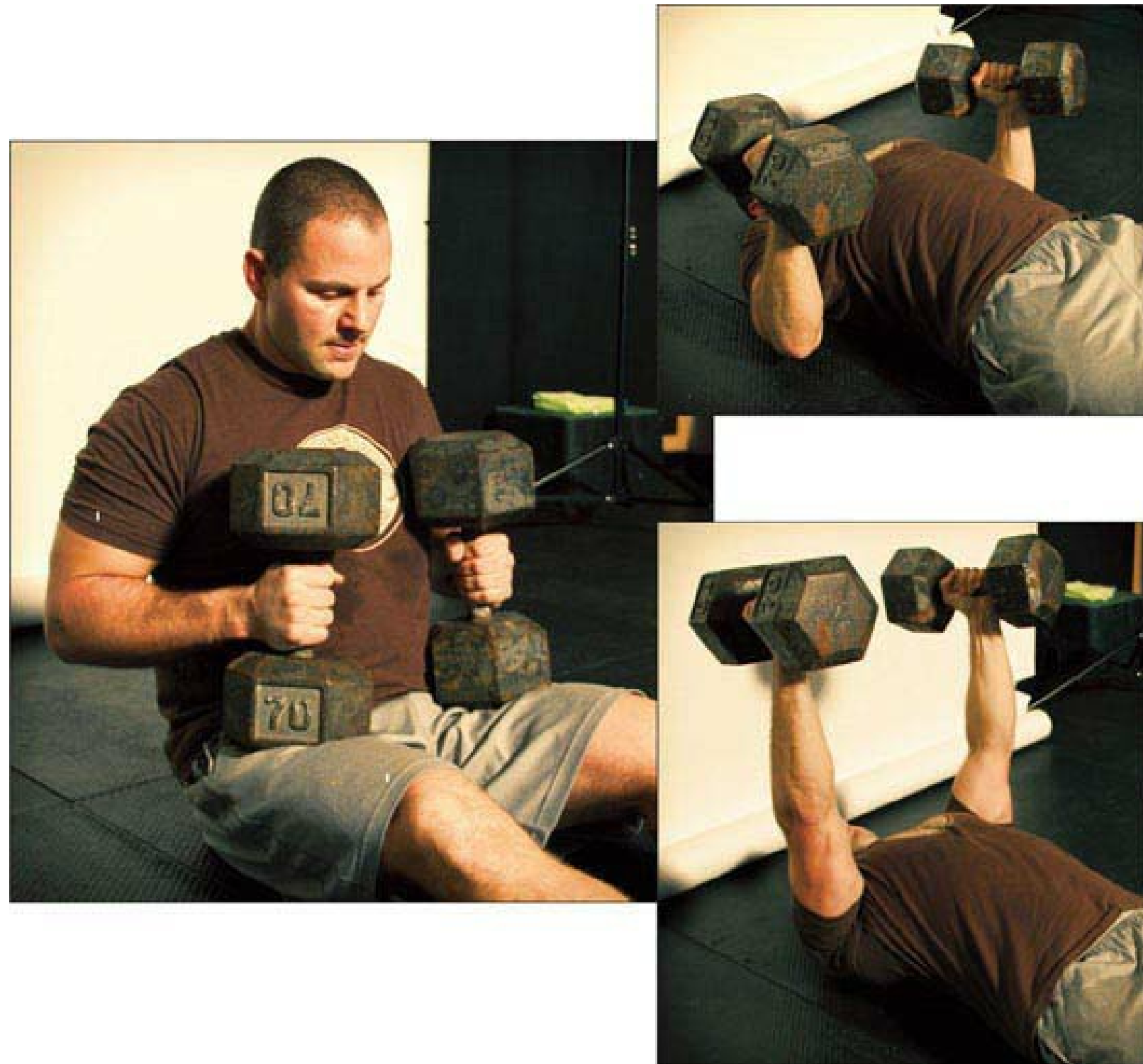


DUMBBELL FLOOR PRESS

A great variation of dumbbell benching is the floor press variation. This forces you to

lower the weights under control to avoid bouncing or crashing your triceps to the floor.

I am a big believer in always controlling the weights, and if someone has a hard time slowing down while dumbbell benching, I will move them to floor presses so they feel the arms crashing to the ground. This helps the lifter understand they must control the weights at all times.



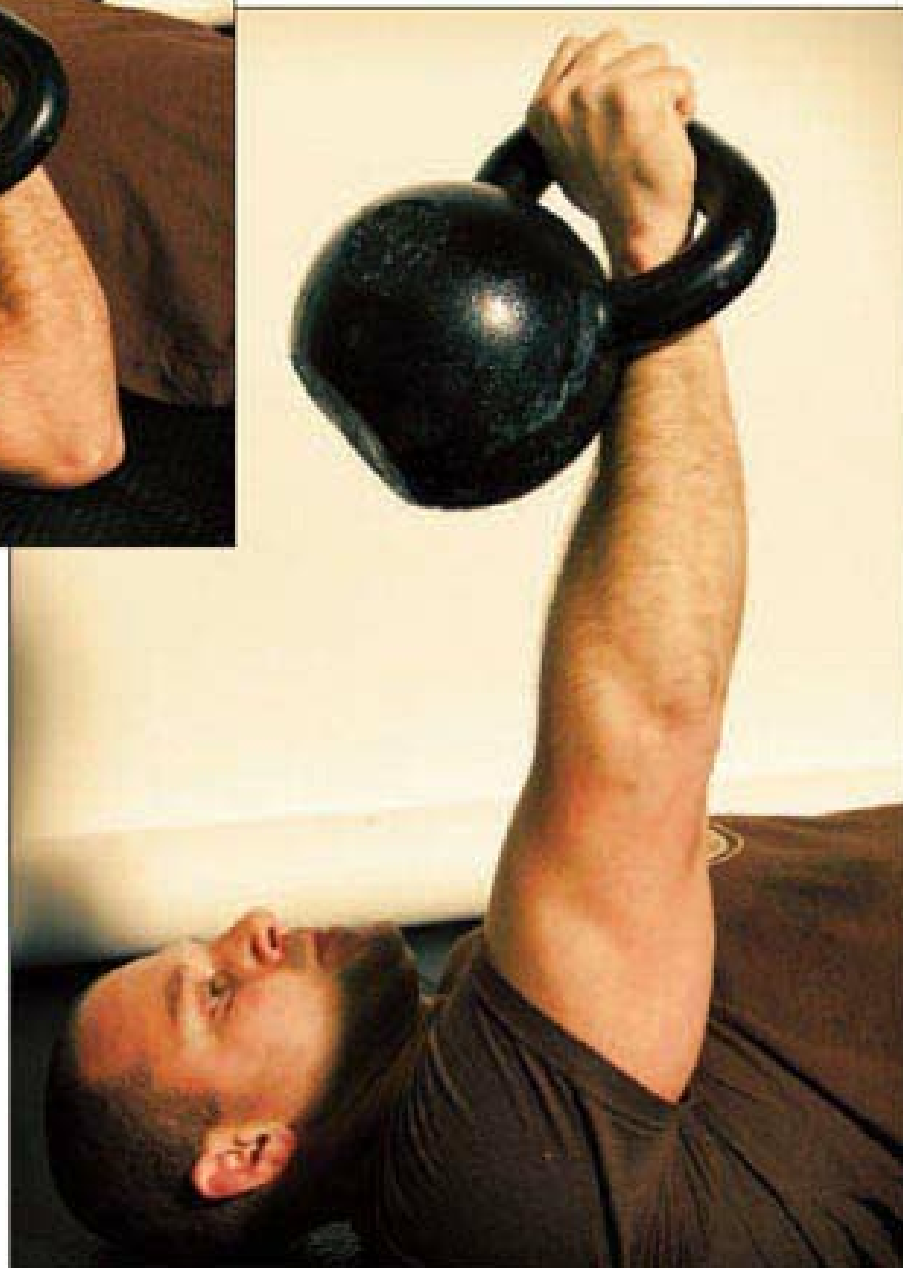
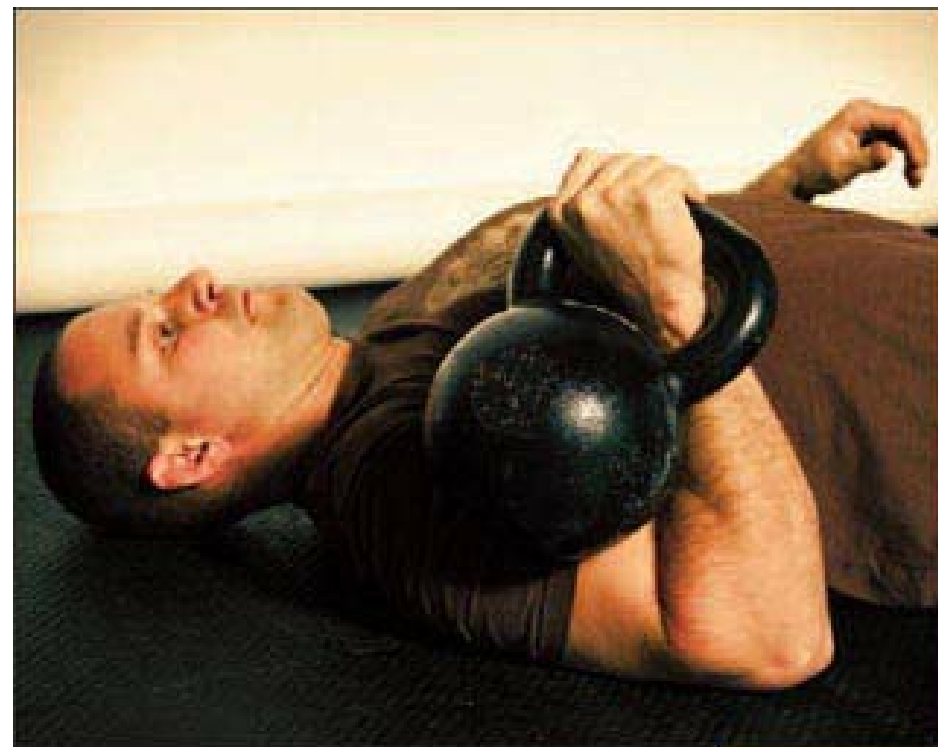
KETTLEBELL FLOOR PRESS

When using kettlebells, sink your palm deep into the handle and angle the handle down across the thick part of your thumb. This will keep your wrist straight, which helps you

stabilize the kettlebell. When you bend your wrist, the kettlebell will take your arm for a ride. Stability and control must be your priorities.

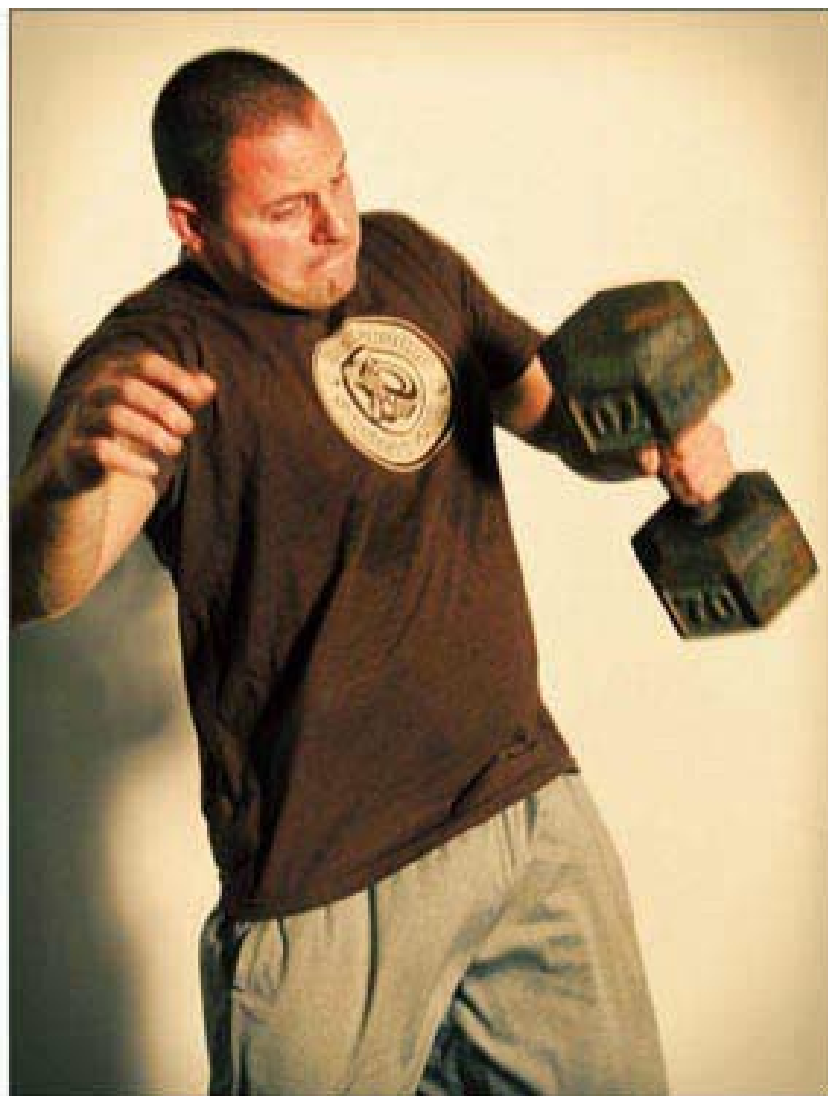
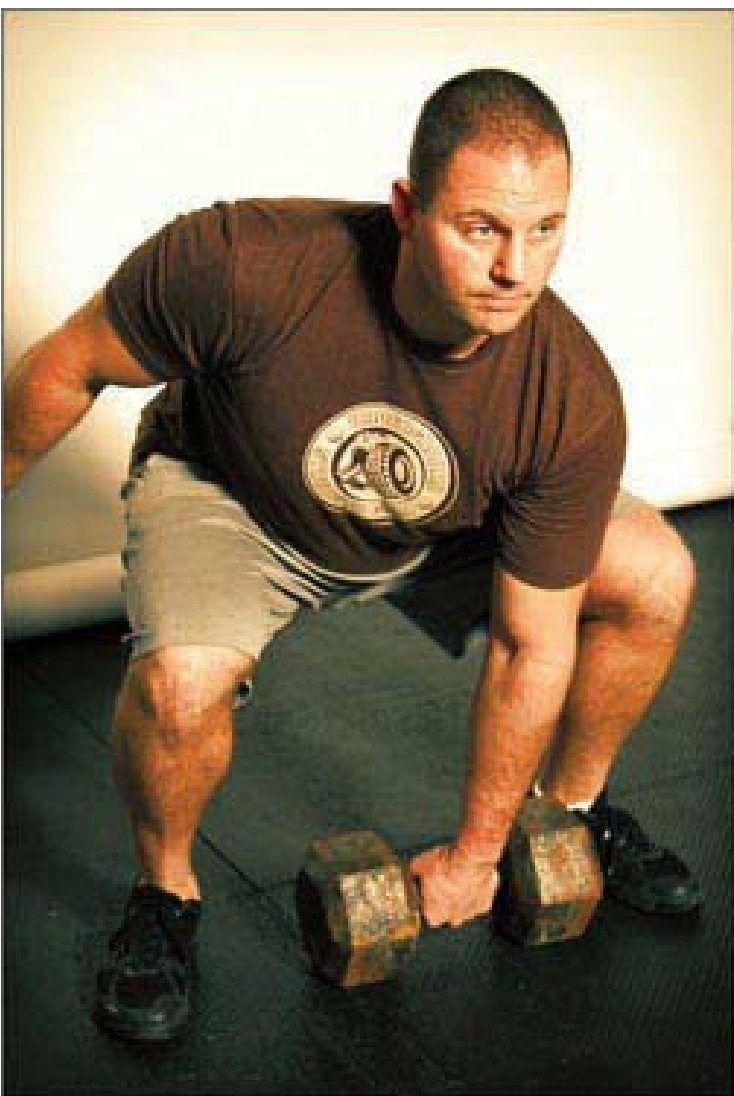
When grabbing a kettlebell from the floor, be it a press, Turkish get up, get up situp, etc., make sure you use two hands to pull the weight onto your body to safely grab the kettlebell. Don't injure yourself picking up the bell with unsafe technique.

Just like with the dumbbell, keep your elbows in and engage your lats. Gently touch your triceps to the floor and explode the bell back up.



DUMBBELL SNATCH

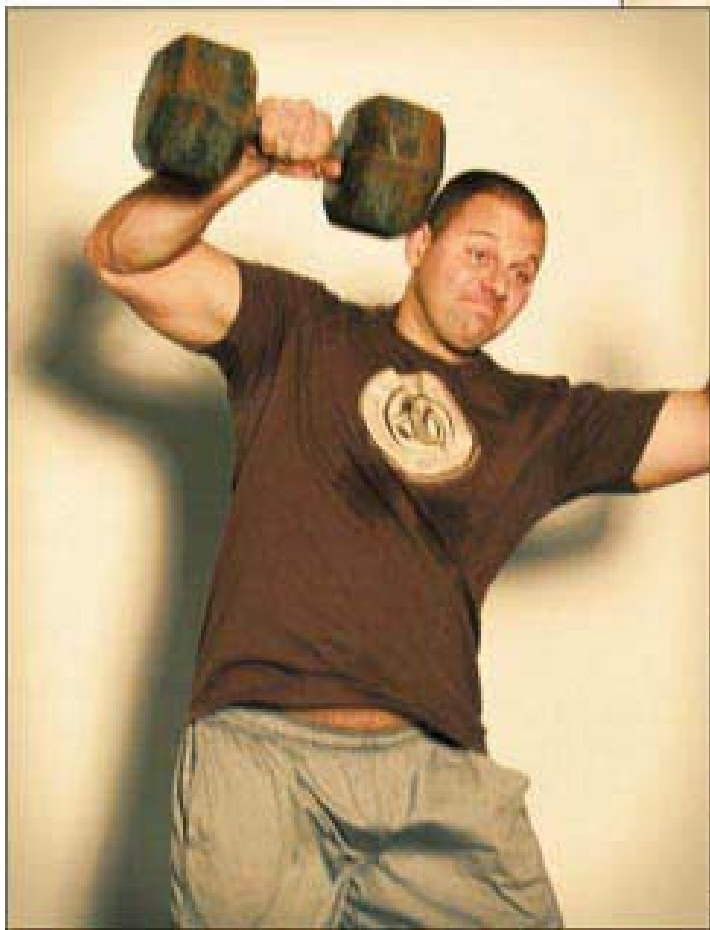
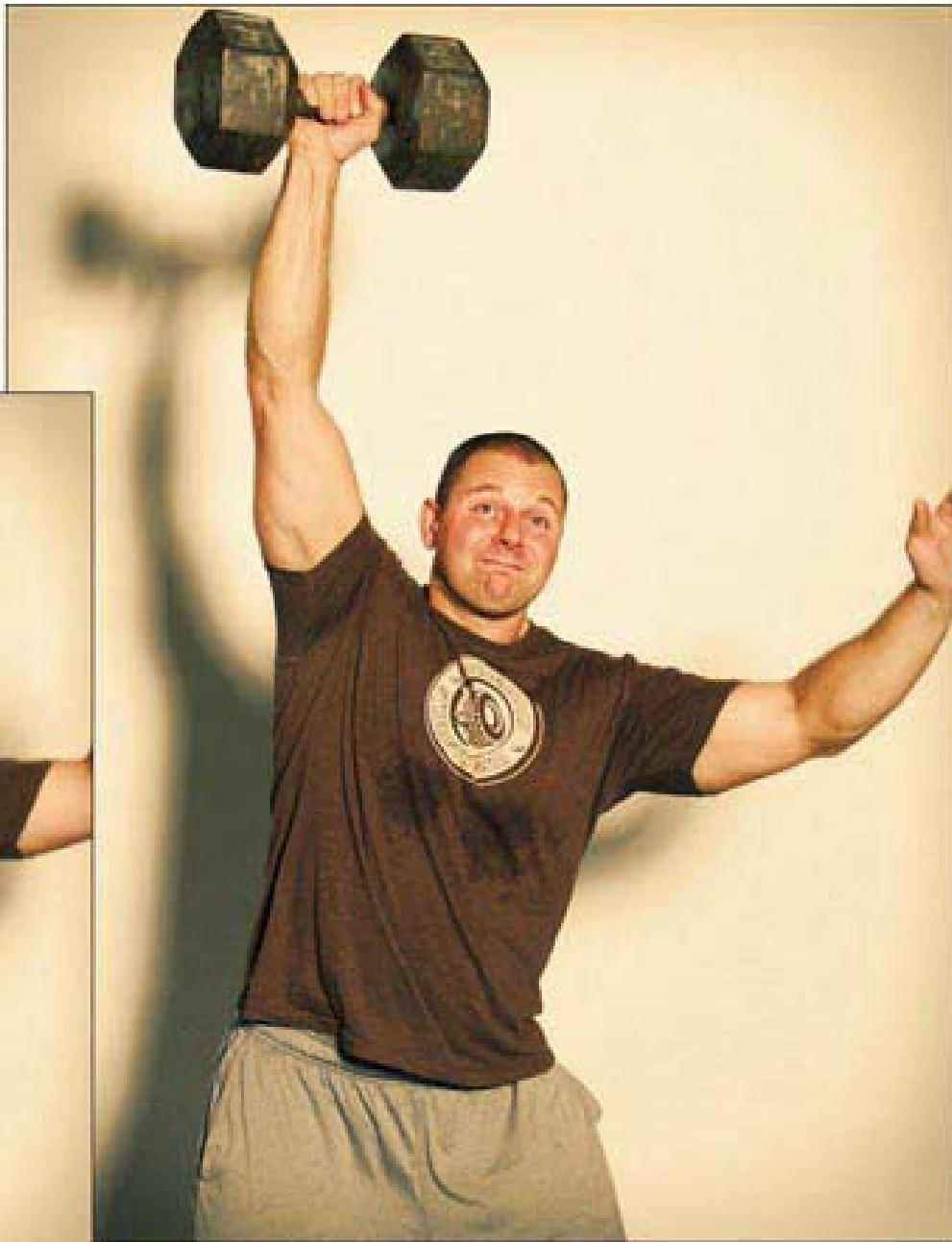
- *Step over the dumbbell as if you're going to deadlift the dumbbell. Squat down with a flat back and your chest tall, with no hands on your legs during the rep.*
- *Squat up aggressively and pull your elbow upward while cleaning the dumbbell. On the way up, the dumbbell faces your body, but when you rack the dumbbell, turn your palm in toward your face. This is the safe, neutral hand position we often use on most pressing exercises.*
- *With the lighter dumbbell you can strict press the weight overhead; with the heavier weights you can perform a push press or the jerk.*
- *The jerk requires more coordination and athleticism. You can perform a squat jerk or split jerk. When performing a split jerk, perform 2 reps of the clean and jerk and switch the lead foot on each rep to develop balance.*
- *There are two pauses with the weight: overhead and again on the shoulder. Do not pause when lowering the dumbbell down to the hang position. Many pause at the waist. You want to go from the dumbbell on your shoulder to squatting down fast with the weight; almost touch the floor and then quickly rebound back up and rip the dumbbell back to the rack position. This fast eccentric helps your posterior take advantage of the stretch reflex, allowing you to pull faster on the way up.*



- *Start on your weaker hand and always perform equal reps on each side.*
- *The dumbbell snatch is the follow-up exercise for the dumbbell push press or clean*

and press. Why? Because I prefer snatching the weight up and lowering the dumbbell to the shoulder as opposed to taking the dumbbell from overhead down to your lower leg in one shot. Most people lose control like that, and when technique goes out the window, injury chances rise.

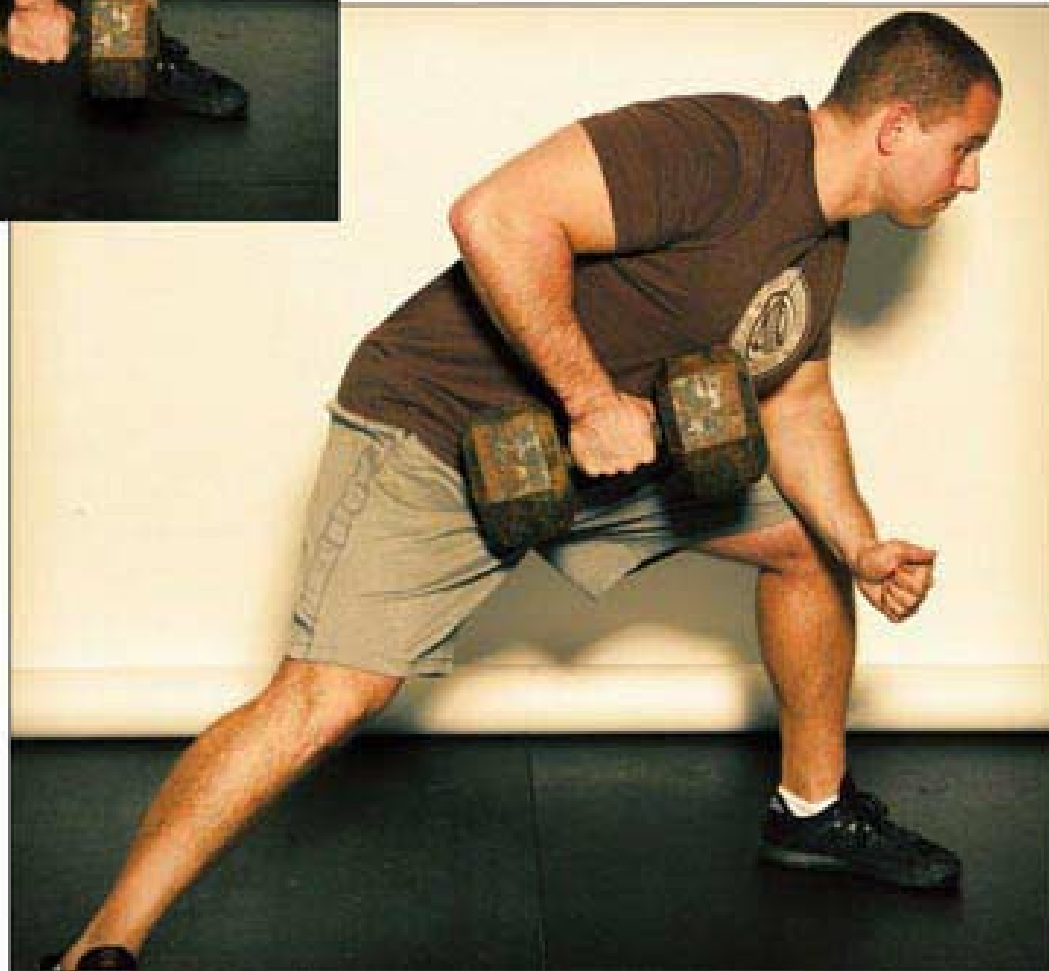
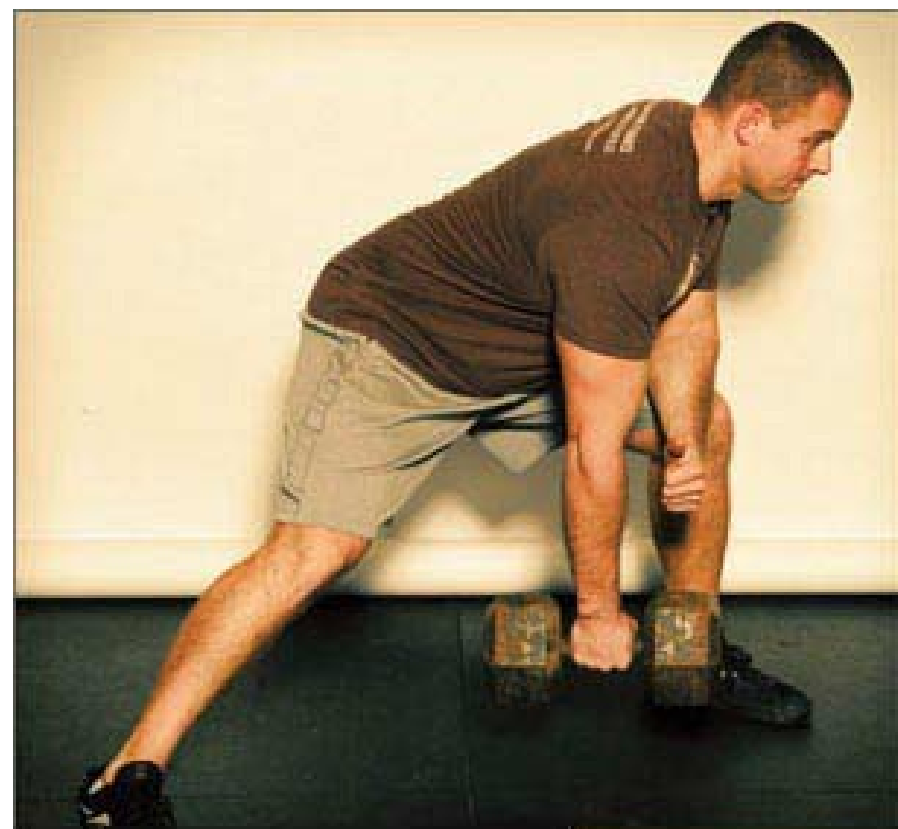
- From the shoulder, squat down quickly and lower the dumbbell to mid-shin level. From mid-shin, your arm should be straight and your back should be flat. Then rip the weight back overhead.
- Common mistakes when going too heavy are to swing the weight up rather than pull, placing your non-working hand on your leg for support or pressing the weight to finish the rep. Go lighter and focus on technique first & foremost.



ONE ARM ROW

One of my favorite exercises is the one-arm row. . There are several variations to this exercise. I suggest experimenting with all of them and seeing which works best for you.

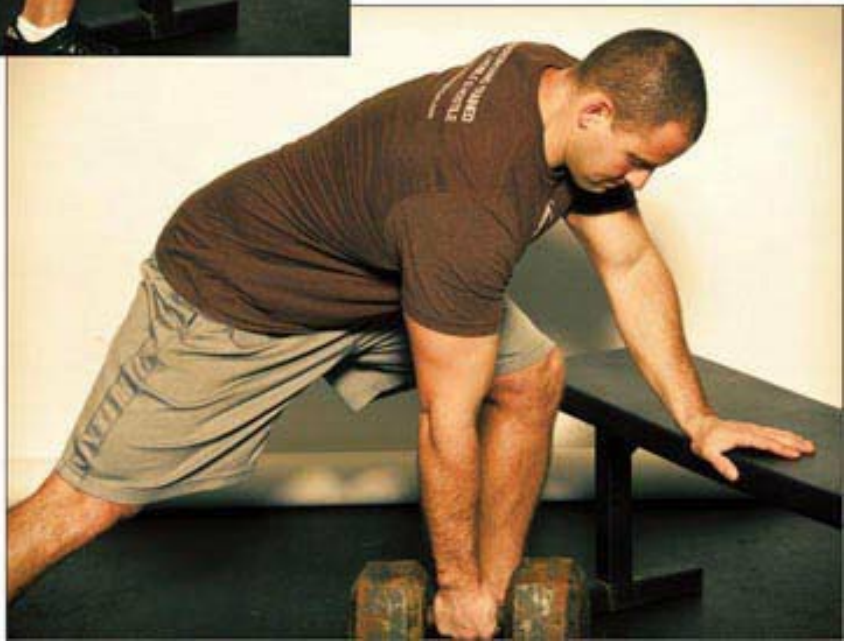
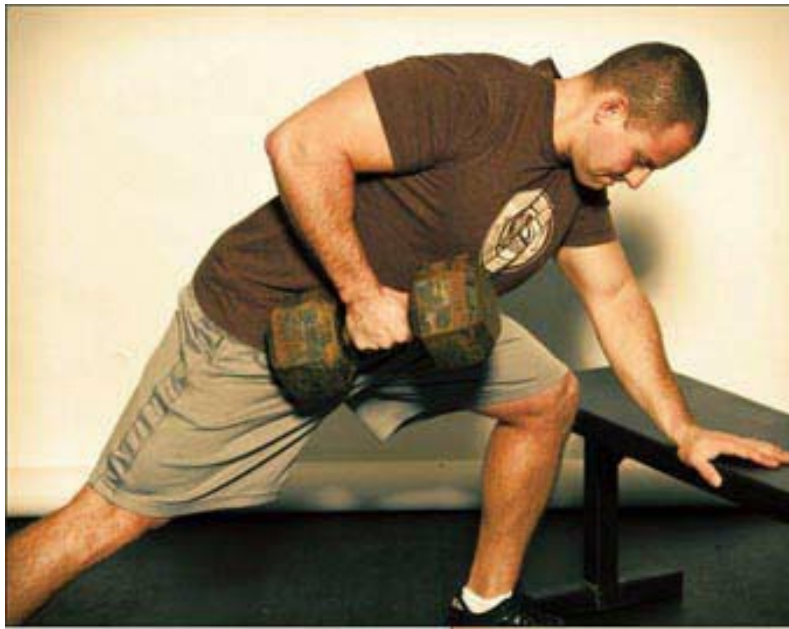
In the photos, you see 1-arm rows performed with the back leg extended back. You can also perform more of a squat motion and row the dumbbell upward towards the chest. When the leg is back, you can row back at a slight angle.



The important points are:

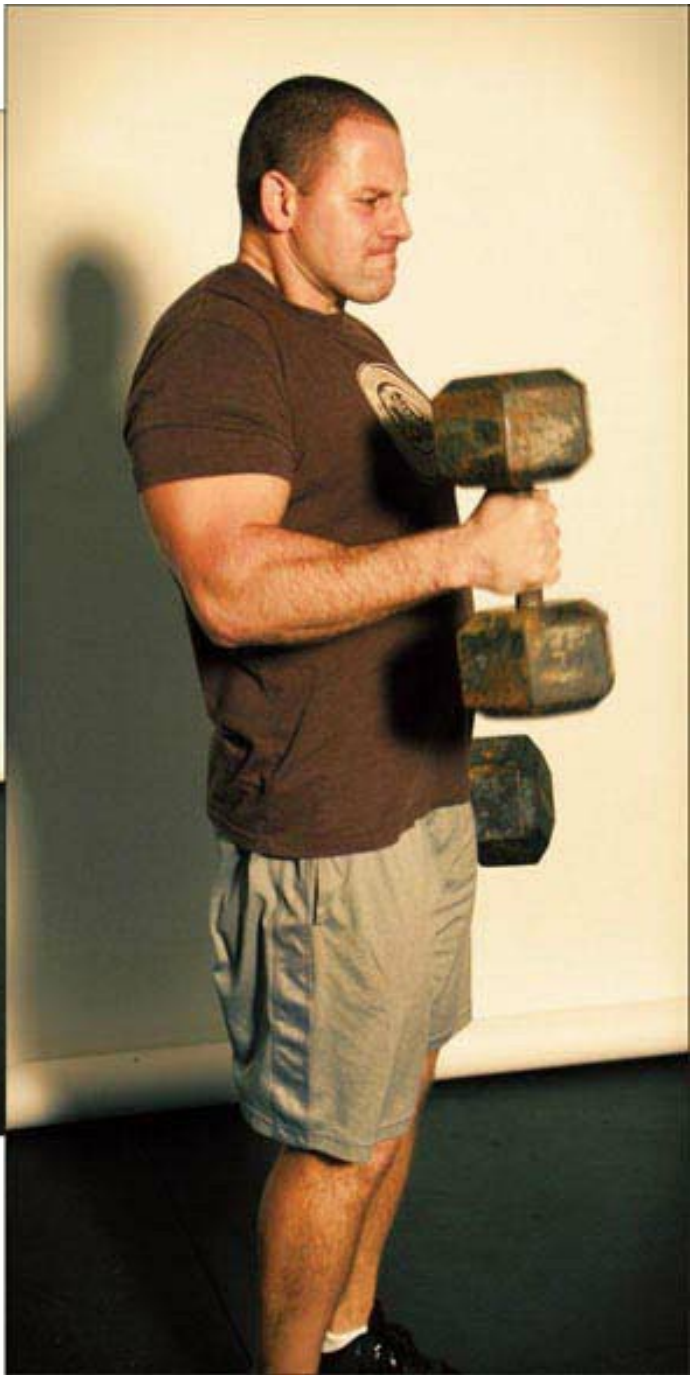
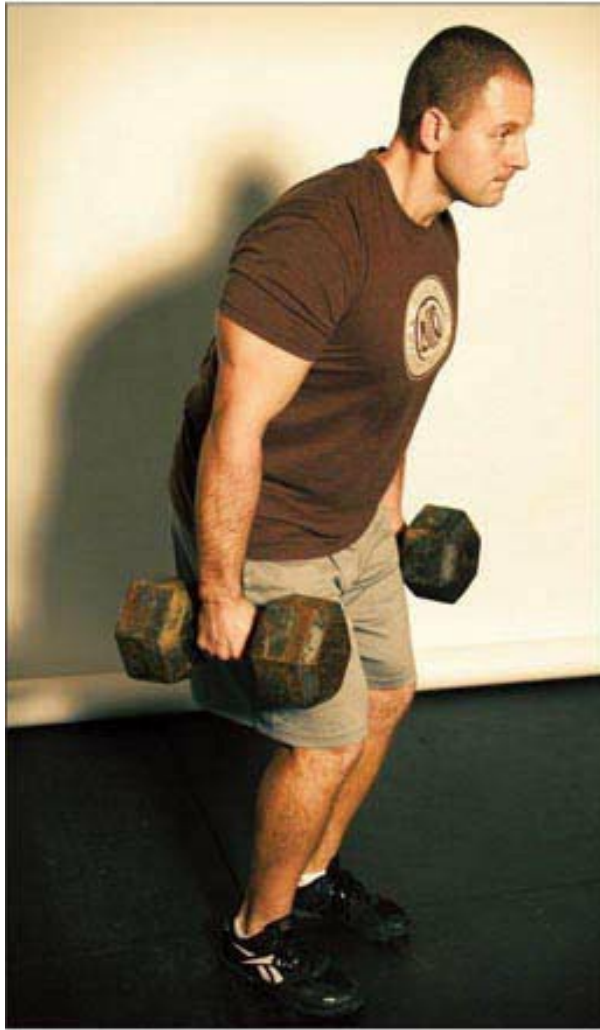
- *Grab the dumbbell in the middle of the handle to ensure best gripping.*
- *Keep your lower back flat.*
- *Avoid over-rotating when pulling the weight up. A slight rotation is fine, but you will know when you're overdoing it.*

- *Stretch your arm fully at the bottom of each rep.*
- *Perform equal reps on both arms.*



ONE ARM CHEAT CURL

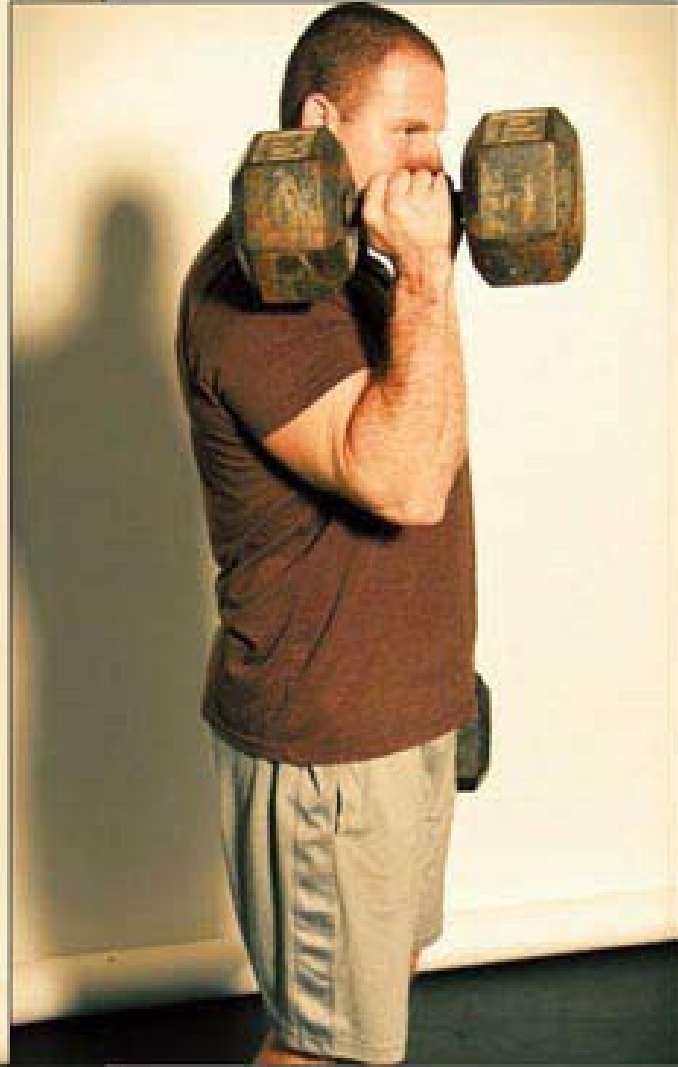
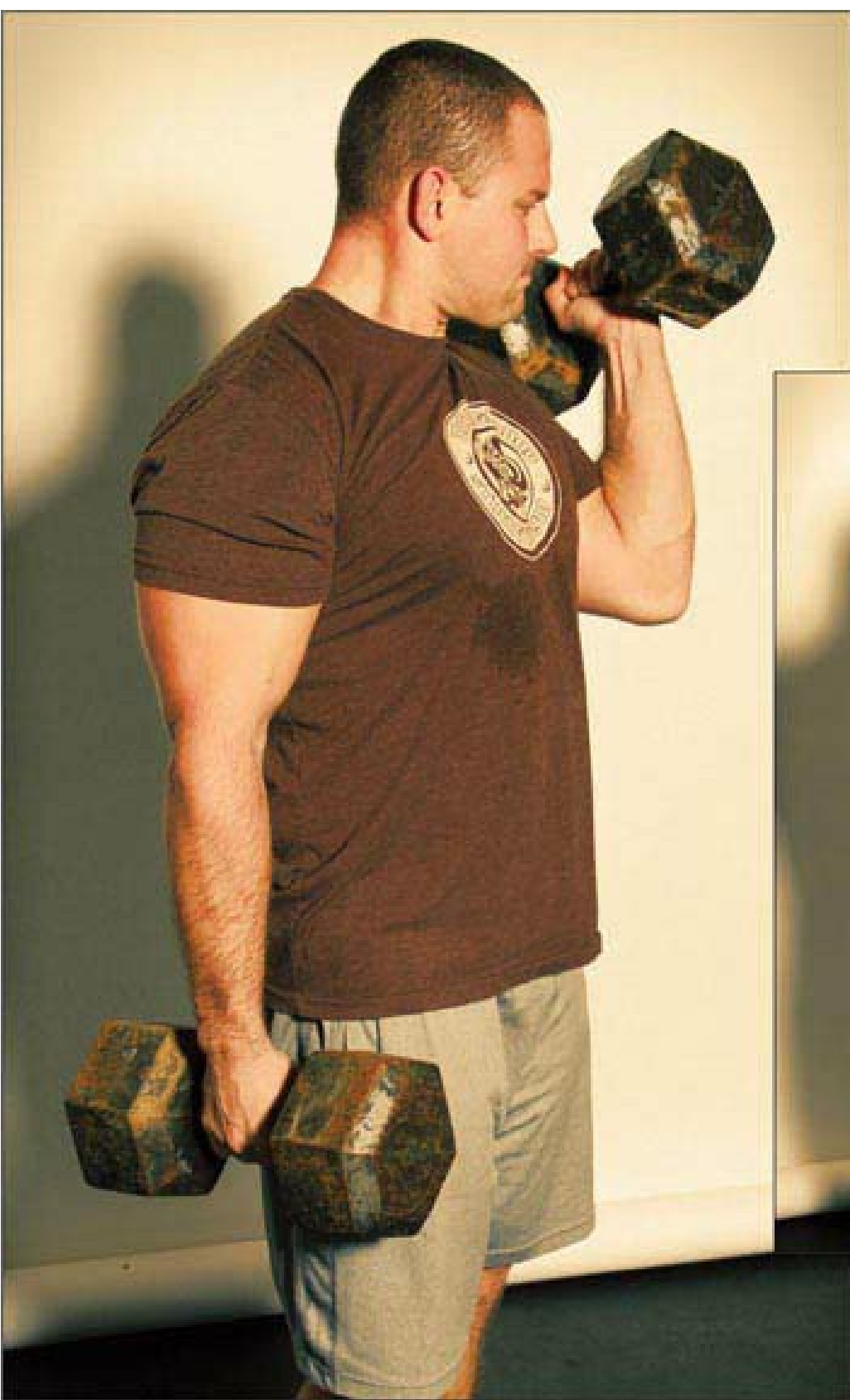
Just like the barbell cheat curl, you are using the slight cheating motion to use heavier weights, not to make it easier with the same weight. I prefer a hammer grip, where the hands do not rotate on the way up or down.



- *Grab the dumbbell handle tightly; do not allow the grip to loosen.*
- *Sit back with the hips slightly while the upper body bends forward. Use the slight hip nudge to help you rip the dumbbell up, then lower the weight under control.*

Variations of the dumbbell cheat curl are:

- *1 arm at a time.*
- *See-saw motion, where one arm curls up while the other arm lowers the weight.*
- *Double, moving both arms at the same time.*
- *Isometric, where one arm is held in the midway curl position while the other arm performs all the prescribed reps; then switch hands.*

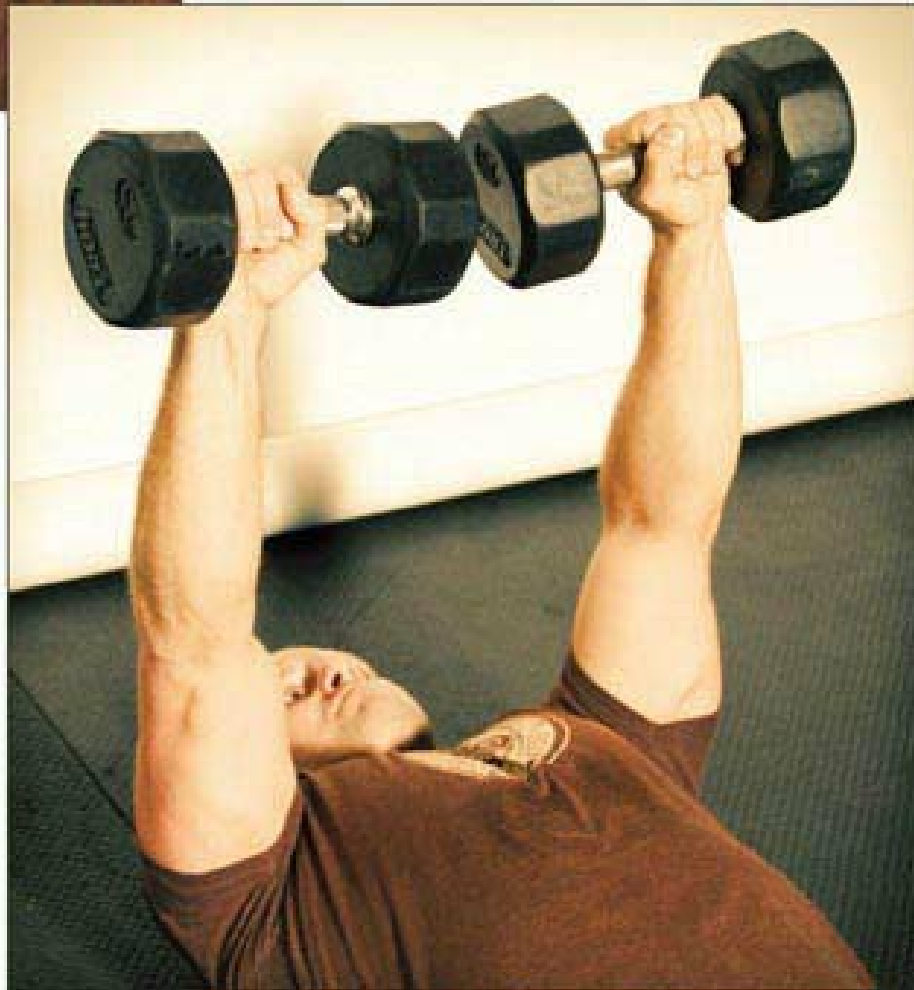
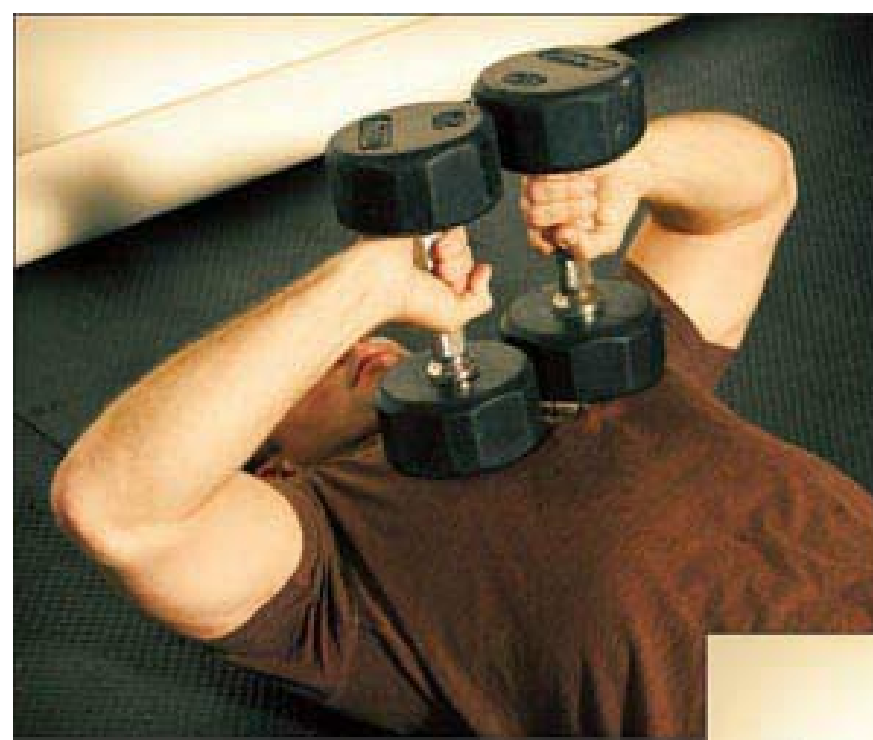


TATE PRESS

Popularized by Dave Tate when he was a powerlifter at Westside Barbell, now the owner of EliteFTS.com, Dave used this as his preferred triceps exercises to boost his bench press strength.

Keep the head of the dumbbells together the entire time, flaring your elbows out.

Do not bounce the dumbbells off the chest, and avoid turning this exercise into a dumbbell bench press by going too heavy. Use the triceps and make sure the head of the dumbbells fully touch your chest before pressing the dumbbells back up to full lock out.

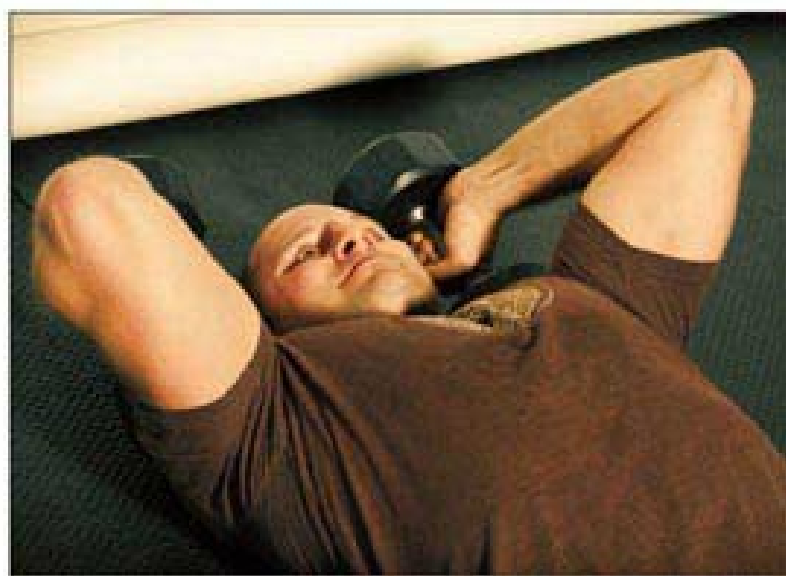
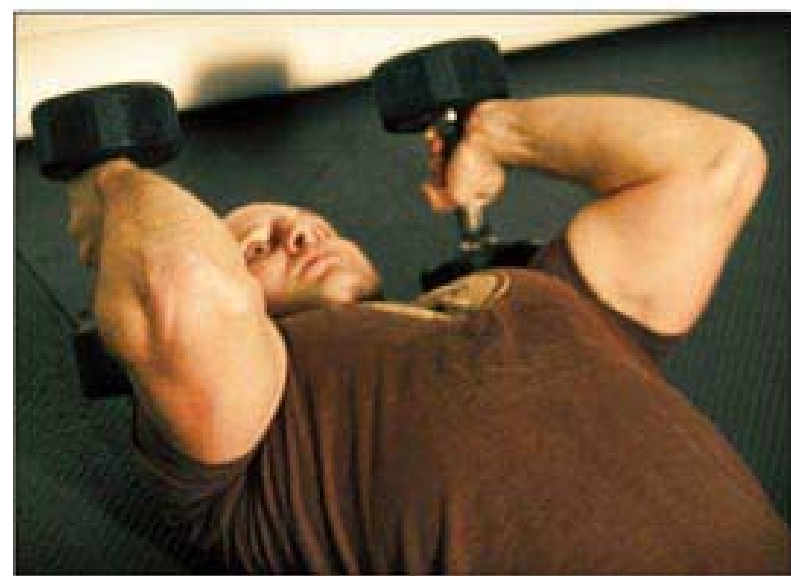
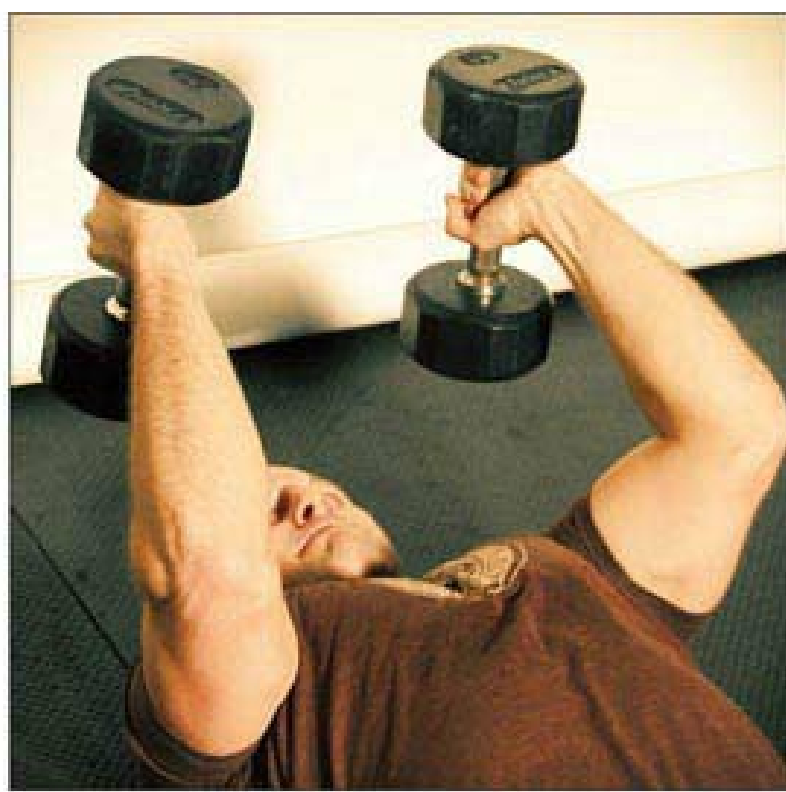
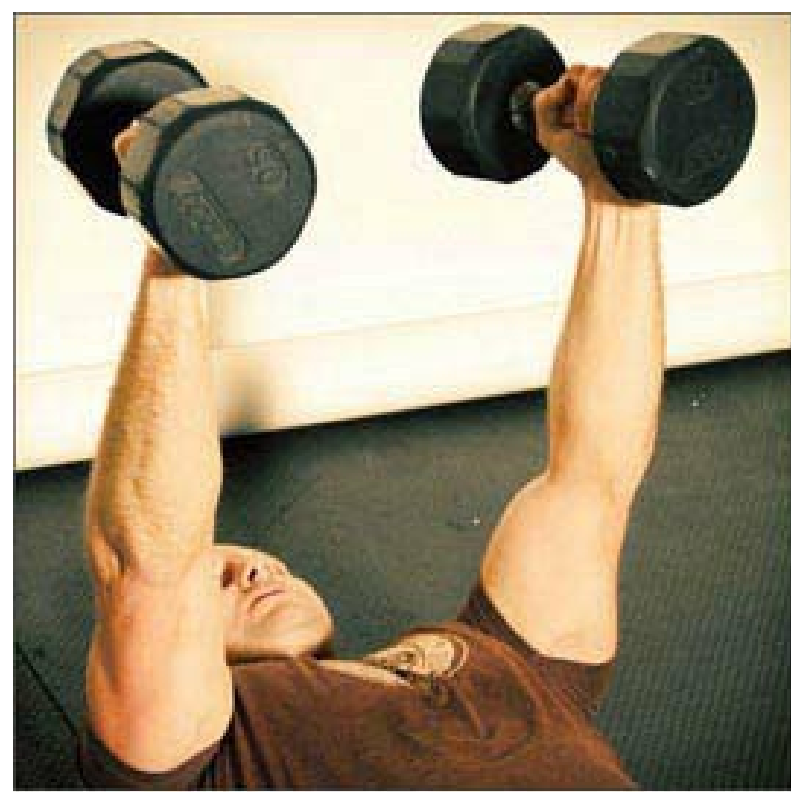




Dave Tate, popularized the Tate Press for legendary triceps development.

DUMBBELL ROLL BACK

I also learned these from Westside Barbell. Rather than performing a strict bodybuilder-style triceps extension, you now roll the dumbbells back and stretch your triceps, then quickly roll them up and blast the dumbbells up, fully extending your arms. The dumbbells will go right outside your head on each rep.



TRAP BAR DEADLIFT

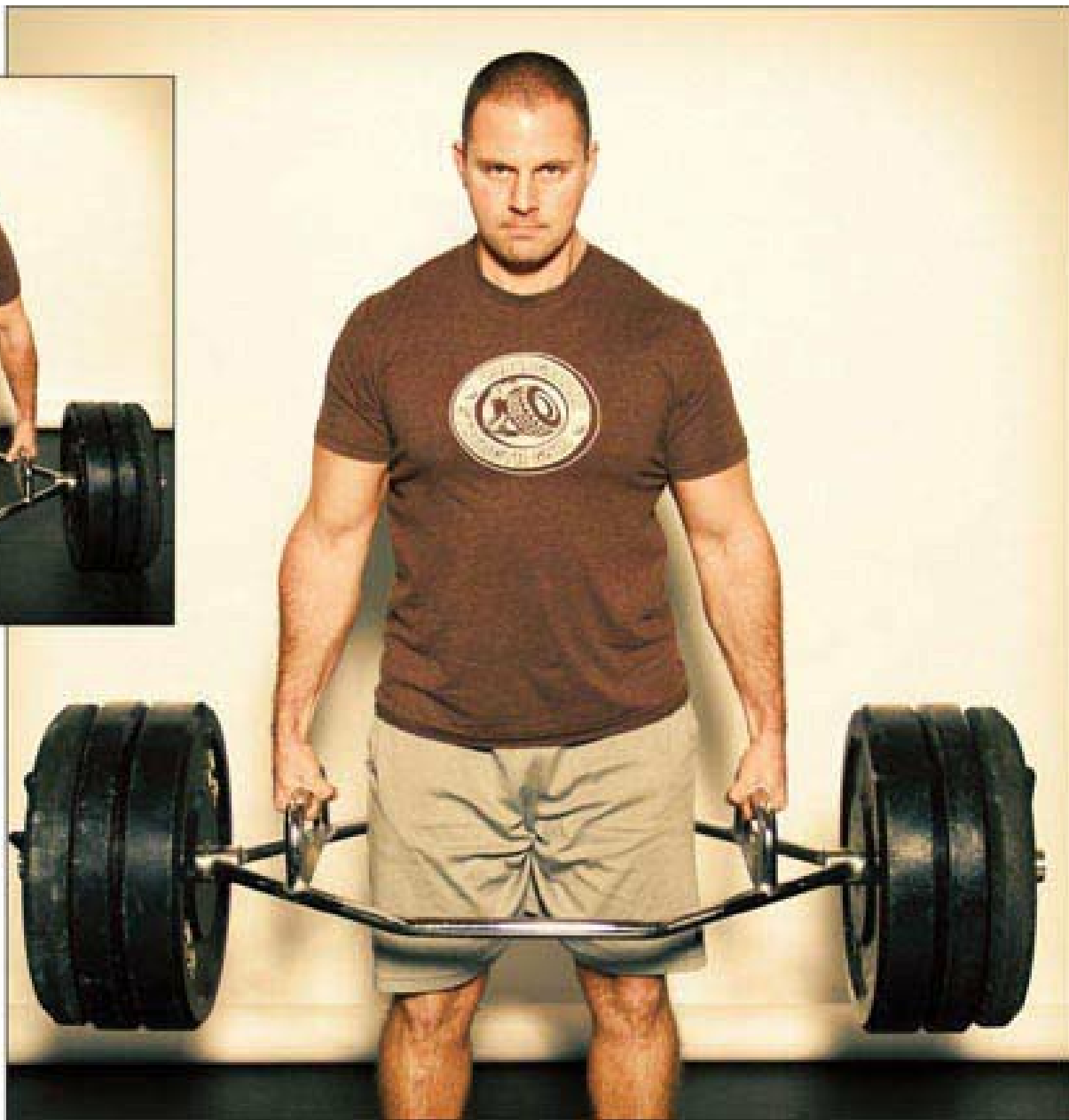
One of my favorite deadlift variations for beginner and intermediate athletes, the trap bar deadlift, is a great starting lift to strengthen the legs and back.

You can use high handles for the new lifters, low handles for the experienced lifters.

Focus on centering all points of your body:

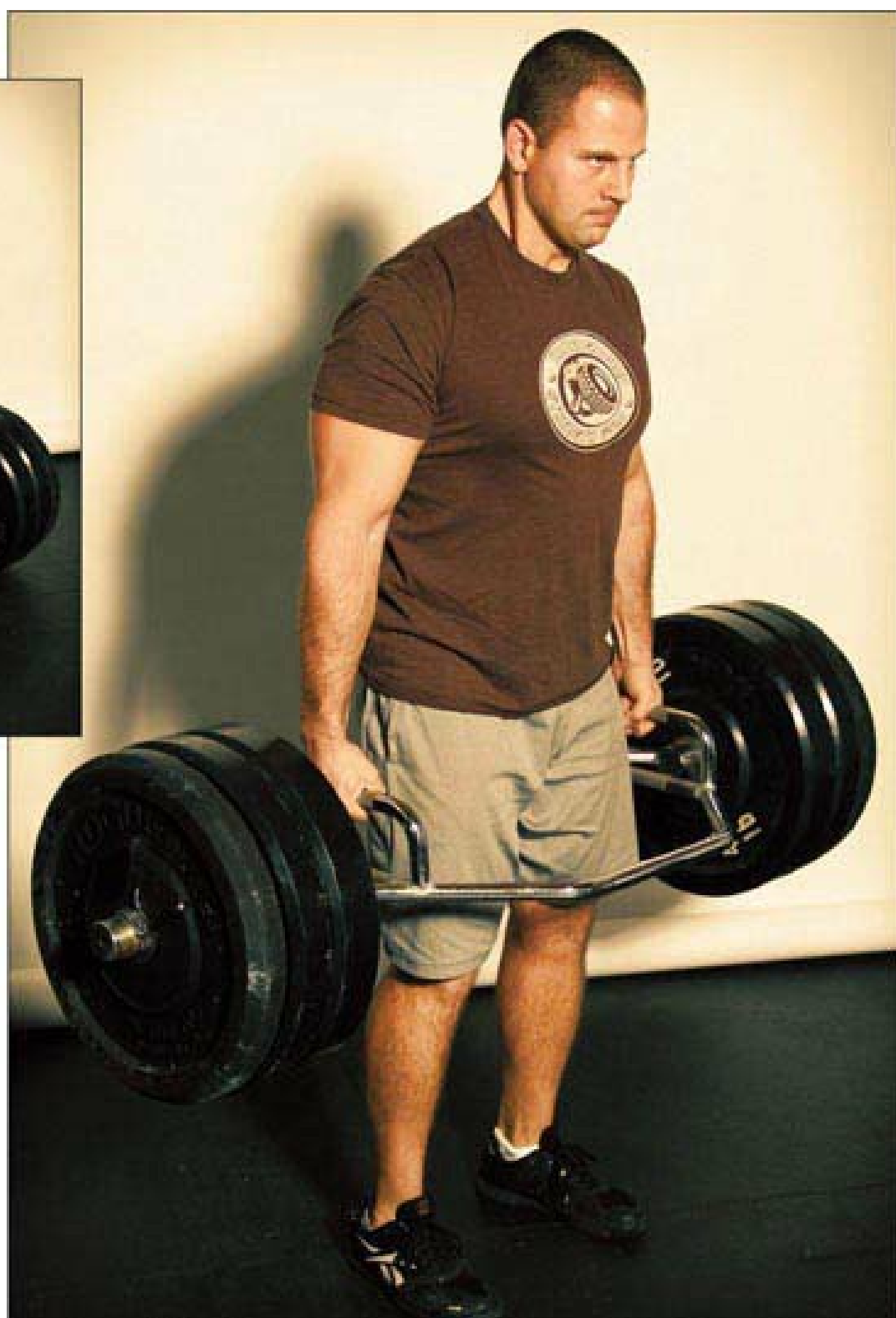
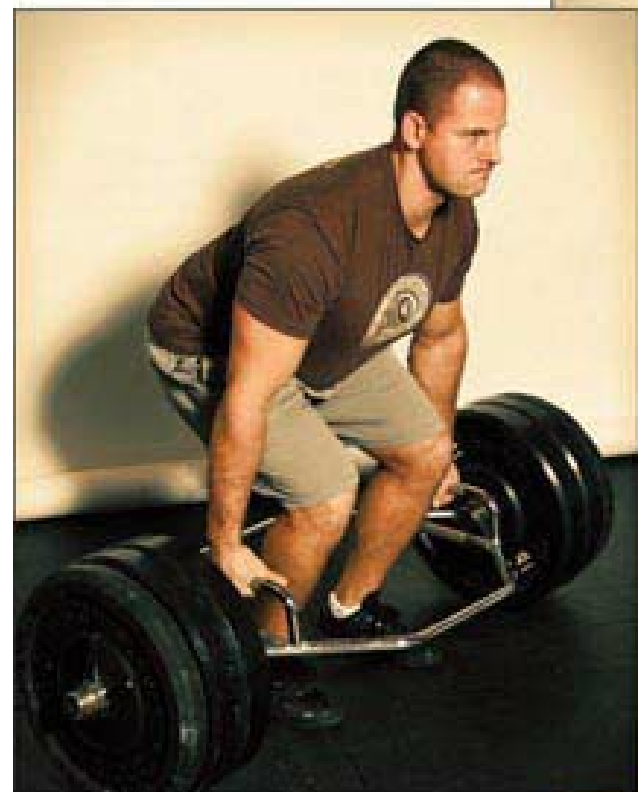
- *Center your feet in the middle of the trap bar. Feet will be shoulder-width apart or slightly inside shoulder width.*
- *Hands will grab the center of the handle.*
- *The back must be flat throughout the deadlift.*
- *Keep the eyes straight ahead. Looking up forces the neck into hyperextension, and oftentimes causes the upper back to round over.*

- *Pull your shoulders back and remain stable.*



Common mistakes are to lose stability at the top of the deadlift. Unlike a straight bar, the trap bar has open space around your entire body. This is where you learn how to keep tension in your entire trunk. Squeeze your glutes at the top of the rep and stand tall; avoid leaning back.

When the weights touch the ground, explode back up. Avoid relaxing or hunching over at the bottom when the weights touch the ground. Reps should be touch and go from the ground with a 1 or 2 second pause at the top.



SLED TRAINING

The first sled I began using was in the form of a front-end tractor tire. I called my wife's uncle and he stopped over with his heavy-duty drills and drilled a hole through the tire. I secured an eyebolt through the tire and purchased 2 long tow straps from a construction supply web site.

I began using this tire sled for simple forward, backward, and sideways drags and sprints until I heard an interview with a coach talking about speed and power development.

The coach spoke about throwing medicine balls and performing explosive pushing and pulling with bands. I had no bands at the time, but had 16 ft straps attached to the tire.

I experimented during my own workouts at the parking lot of the elementary school down the road. The training felt awesome with the tire, and speaking with Louie Simmons solidified my belief that I was in the right direction.

He told me how he would have his combat athletes work the sled for time. 10 minutes of non-stop sled drags, 5 minutes of rowing and pulling, 5 minutes of pushing and more.



Louie convinced me to buy the Westside sled so I could use it on grass and cement. My tire was crushing the lawn at the elementary school, and I was anticipating the day that the principal would be waiting for "that guy" who's been tearing up their lawn.

I bought the sled from Louie and remember it arrived with NO box and about 25 stamps taped ON the sled. It was a classic form of shipping, and I took that bad boy to the school the moment it arrived. I showed my Dad the sled and asked if he could find scrap metal and weld me 2 more sleds of the same size. He did and I was set, ready, and armed to build monsters through the use of the sled.

I'll never forget the football crew getting crushed when I had them drag the sled for 10 minutes non-stop. The sled kicked their asses so badly that the rest of the workout went out the window. The boys were crushed, and I could not believe how brutal it was on them.

I mixed in the ideas I learned on sleds with my wrestlers as part of a circuit. The sled was mixed with sprints, truck pushing, playground training, and wrestling drills on the grass.



We performed the circuit after our garage training, and we started with about 10 minutes of circuit work and built them up to 20 minutes. These wrestlers got so damn tough it blew my mind. The circuit went like this:

- 1) Push Truck Across Parking Lot (Approx. 150 ft)
- 2) Sprint Up Hill, Walk Down, Repeat 5 X
- 3) Forward Sled Drag x 150 Ft
- 4) Sprint 150 ft to Playground
- 5) Picnic Table Military Press x 10 - 15 reps
- 6) Pull Ups On Monkey Bars x Max Reps
- 7) Bulgarian Split Squats Off Picnic Table Bench x 10 / 10 Ea. Leg
- 8) Sprint Back to Grass Area For Sled
- 9) Sled Power Chest Press x 5 reps
- 10) Sled Power High Pull x 5 reps
- 11) Sled Backwards Drag x 100 Ft

The circuit looks like a lot, but it worked perfectly. There was a long empty parking lot, a short hill, a long stretch of grass, another parking area between the grass, and the playground. And there ya have it, a place where Gladiators were built.



Sled training doesn't need to be complicated. Keep it simple and use the sled or the prowler/dog sled on the regular. The fitness benefits are huge, and the sleds do not beat up the body.

I have my athletes hit sled work after almost every workout. You can't screw up dragging a sled forward, backward, or sideways. It's a simple yet powerful method for developing leg strength.

When a beginner can't squat or perform lunges, you know they can walk, right!? There ya have it; start dragging that sled. Drag it heavy and power walk, then lighten it up and run it.

There are various pushing sleds nowadays on the market. You can push them with your body more upright or lower to the ground like a bear crawl. The sled drives help you drive from the balls of the feet with a strong forward lean. These pushing sleds use the same motion as truck and car pushing.

Sleds are not just for the lower body. Going back to my influences from others, I learned to push and pull explosively with all sleds to develop power.

You can also use a long battling rope or tie together 3 - 4 tow straps and perform hand-over-hand sled pulls. This is brutal for the upper body, and I was inspired to try it when I saw countless World's Strongest Man Contests where the athletes pulled trucks and buses from the seated position. Try the same with your sled while squatting down.

Sled Training Exercises

SLED ROWING

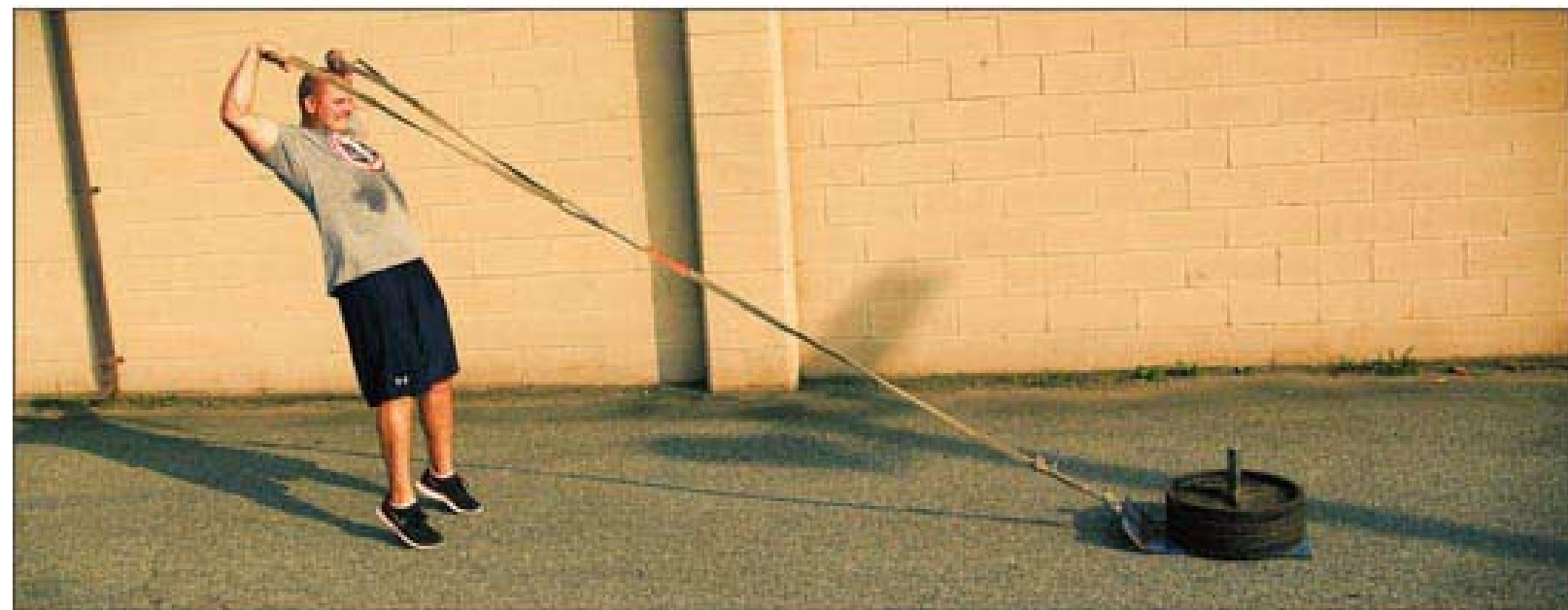
Make sure the tow strap is tight and has no slack left. Your body can lean forward slightly yet remain flat in the back; avoid rounding over.

Aggressively pull the sled and row back. The row should be so explosive that the sled slides across the ground. Walk backwards until the tow strap is tight again, and repeat for desired reps or time.



SLED HIGH PULL

Perform this exercise with the same technique as the row, except now you are pulling your elbows upward and your hands pull towards your traps. This simply develops pulling power from another angle, and like all training, I suggest varying angles and training tools to attack the body from multiple angles, especially if you're an athlete.

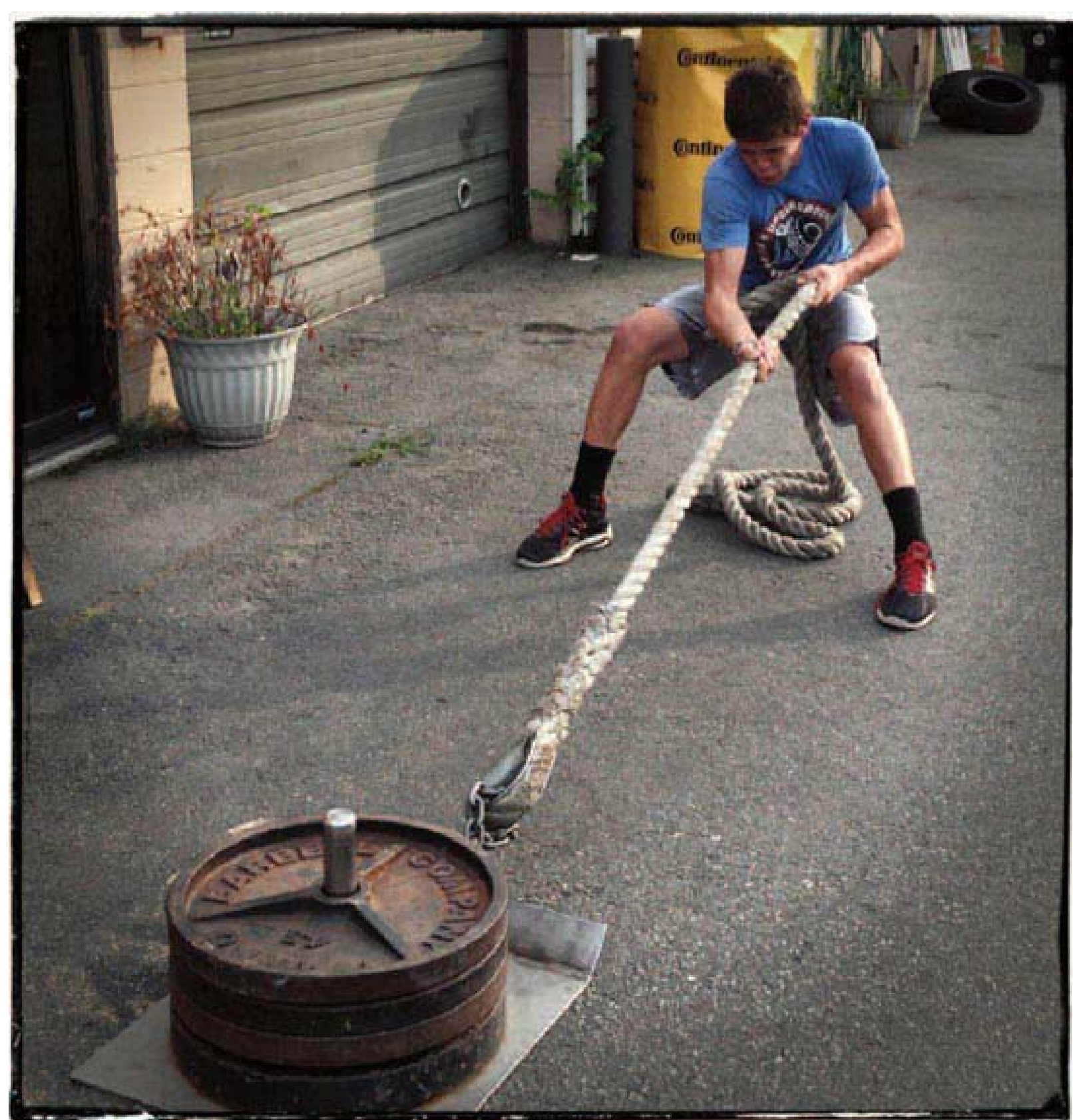


HAND OVER HAND SLED PULLS

Hand Over Hand Sled Pulls - As mentioned earlier you can perform this exercise with a long rope, several tow straps knotted together, or even a short rope. If the rope is short,

then once the sled reaches your feet, jog backwards and repeat for several more reps.

Try performing some hand over-hand pulling coupled with push ups for a brutal upper body workout. To turn this into a full body workout, add squats or squat jumps.



SLED DRAG FORWARD

Depending on the length of the sled tow straps, you can hold the straps behind you or

against your chest. For safety reasons, make sure the sled is not near your ankles.

Drag the sled forward, backward, and sideways. Forward sled drags hit the hamstrings and glutes. Backward drags hit the Quads. Side drags will work your hips and improve lateral strength and stability. You can also attach the tow strap to a weightlifting belt.

When dragging sleds, you can go heavy for strength while power walking, or use medium loads with aggressive sprints. I've seen coaches have athletes run with an empty sled. If the sled is empty, it truly makes no sense. Add some resistance and do work. An empty sled will do nothing.

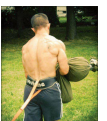
You can also perform hybrid sled work where you drag a sled and also carry an object. This is brutally challenging, and great for overall strength, work capacity, and mental toughness.



HYBRID SLED DRILLS

I've used kettlebells and sandbags for hybrid sled work. This combo is brutal, during which you carry an object and drag the sled at the same time. Use a weight belt and strap the sled to your weight belt. From here, carry the sandbag or kettlebells and mix the carry style each set.

The goal behind hybrid sled work is to raise your overall fitness. Your legs, lungs, and entire body will get stronger. This does not need to be heavy; it's best to use moderate weights on the sled and the carrying object so you can build up some volume with this drill.



Hybrid Sled Variations: Sled is attached to weight belt for each variation

- 1) Kettlebell Farmer Walks
- 2) Kettlebell Rack Walks
- 3) Kettlebell Overhead Walk
- 4) Sandbag Zercher Carry
- 5) Sandbag Shoulder Carry
- 6) Sandbag On Back
- 7) Sandbag Overhead

Don't aim to make these hybrid carries fancy. It will complicate the movement and make it less effective. Pick up the object and start walking. Get after it. Plain and simple, NOT easy.

My experiences with sled training have proven just how effective the sled is. I have used the sled for strength, stamina, overall fitness, speed, and power, and I've used the sled extensively when I had to rehab my knee after my 3rd knee surgery.

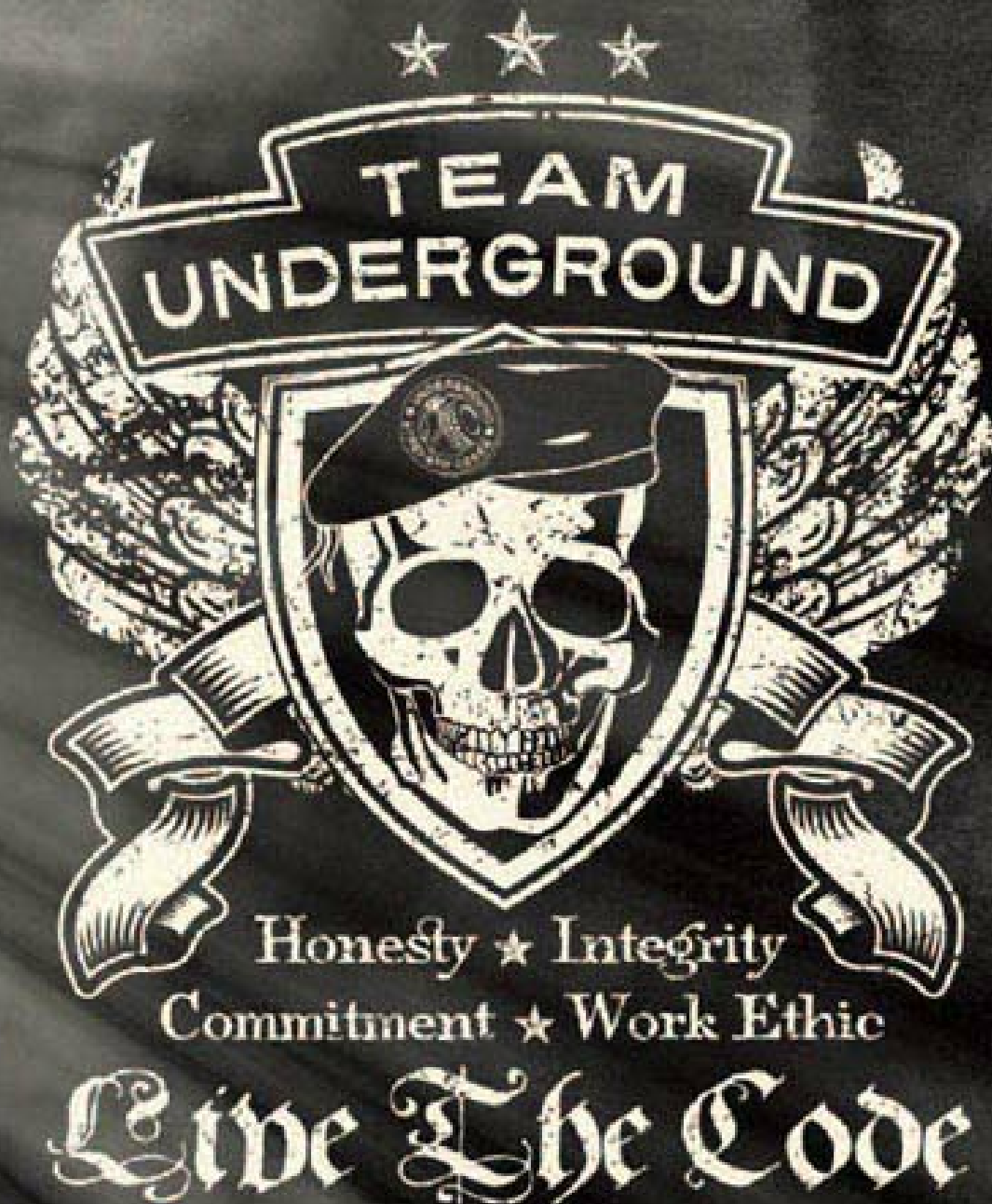
Although I am not a Doctor, PT, etc., I have helped our athletes come back very fast after various leg injuries and surgeries by using the sled in various ways. Without a doubt, I recommend you purchase a sled or make your own sled.



"Pick up the object and start walking. Get after it."

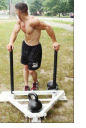
Plain and simple, Not easy."

— Zach Even-Esh



FINAL WORDS & LIVING THE CODE

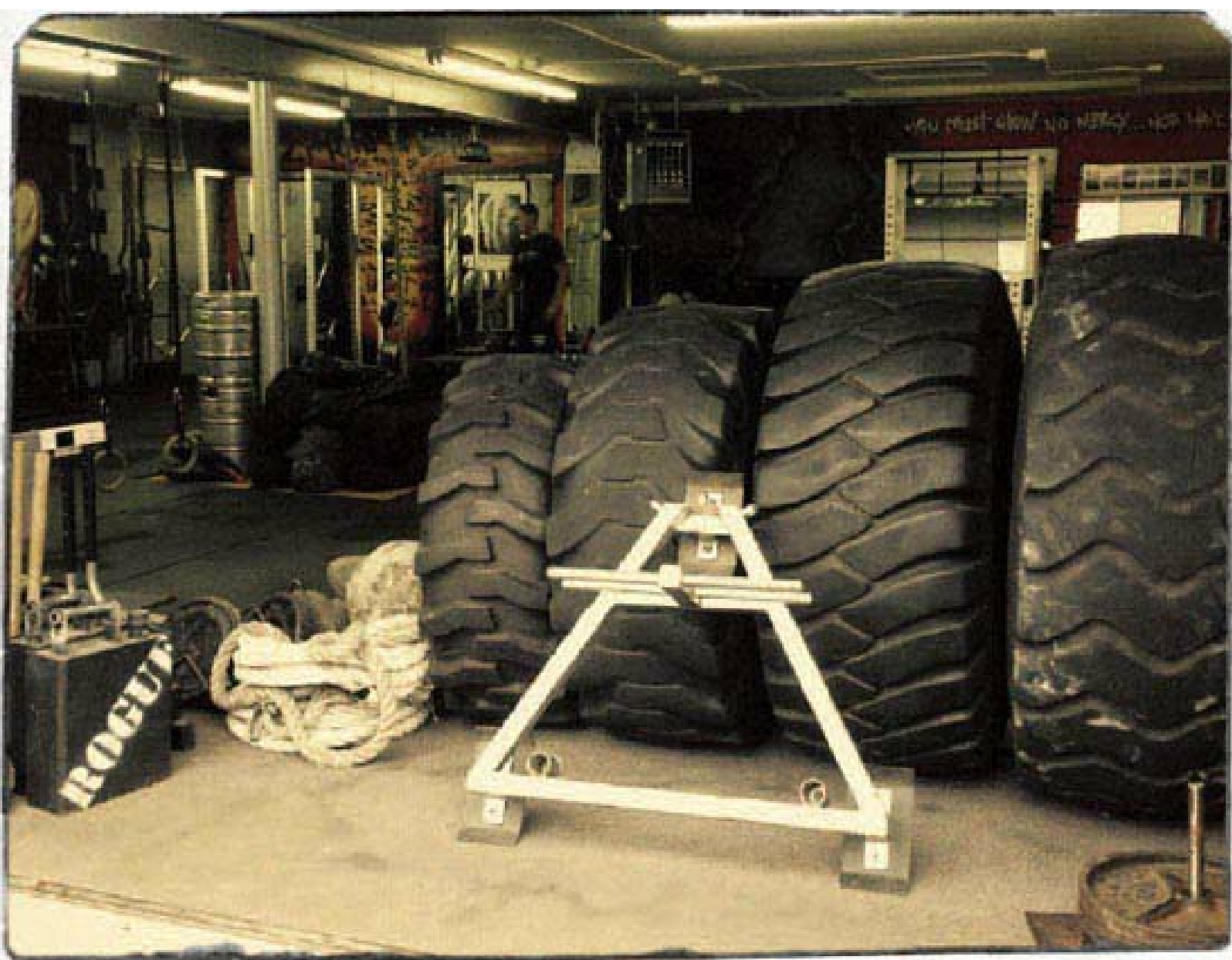
Exercise and your health are true gifts. Don't ever take them for granted. Focus on health first. If your training makes you feel worse, then you need to change and evolve.



Your age and experience in training will guide you most. My training is constantly evolving, not so much in the exercises I use but more so in the intensity, the frequency, how I perform each exercise, and the smaller details.

If you're simply trying to get fit or lose weight, then do what makes you happy and is most fun first and foremost. Don't discriminate against all the variations of exercise. If you love to swim, play tennis, lift heavy or lift light, DO it. That is the BIG key that most people miss.

When the details of a fitness routine are too intimidating, people may quit altogether. I prefer to look at the bigger picture. Just start by moving first and foremost. Change one thing at a time, slow and steady.



It begins simply, like this: Begin training 3 x week. Get rid of soda. The next week, you add 1 salad a day to your daily eating. The week after you learn a new barbell lift. If you try to go full bore, you get overwhelmed.

If you're already training, then open your mind and be humble, like Coach Reeve stated in the introduction. Prepare to evolve your training. I am always evolving and always learning.

I was once brainwashed into thinking that Olympic weightlifting would not make you strong, and here I am, learning from some of the best weightlifting coaches in the country and pushing myself out of my comfort zone to learn this awesome style of training.

As you get older and more experienced in training, you will feel the bumps and bruises that come from hard work. Take your health seriously, and focus on recovery through proper nutrition and tons of mobility. Look at overall health and fitness, not just strength.

I used to make excuses about running or jogging and say ridiculous things such as, "I'm

a power athlete; jogging will break down my muscles and slow me down.”

Nothing was further from the truth. I began adding various running pieces to my training and I got stronger, leaner, and faster. I also felt much healthier as it helped me burn fat.

I deadlifted 525 lbs while training with high volume and running 2 - 3 x week for 1 - 2 miles at a time. I didn't get weaker, that's for sure. I listened to my body and trained accordingly. I also ate accordingly, something people lose sight of. There are countless fitness fads and gimmicks out there, most of which promise massive results by taking short cuts.

The tried and true basics of nutrition remain the same as they do in training.  Eat healthy by getting plenty of quality proteins and healthy fats in your body. Keep the carbohydrates in moderation as sugar wreaks havoc on your body, not just in promoting fat gain but also in hurting your immune system.

Stop looking for the short cuts and the tricks. I used to get caught up in these things myself when I was a beginner back in 1989 and the early 90s. I read the magazines and bought all the special protein powders. I copied the workouts from the magazines and although I worked very hard, I made a major mistake: I was not focused like a laser beam on the basics.

The magazines showed bodybuilders using cables and machines, so I followed suit. The emphasis was on lighter weights and feeling muscles. Breaking PRs and training the mind to be strong was nothing I ever came across.

If you want results, you're gonna have to challenge your mind and body. The body loves being comfortable, and for many people, so does the mind. If you're lucky, you'll have a great training partner or a crew of training partners who all support one another, but, this may not be the case.



You will have to rely on your own drive, self-motivation, and a deep desire within to get things done on your own. The local gyms near you will likely have too many rules and regulations against lifting heavy. Hard work is not acceptable, and people will call you crazy.

Don't fall into their trap; instead, blaze your own path, be it in your garage, basement, backyard, or if you're lucky, at the local hardcore commercial gym.

As you get older, as I like to say, "Life happens." Your leisure time dwindles to less and less. It gets easier to make excuses, especially with the good ol' "I just don't have the time anymore" BS excuse. As soon as you start making excuses, you become like everyone else.

You know who everyone else is, right? They are the people who have allowed life to

control them. They have allowed circumstances to bring them down, to turn them into weak-minded and weak-bodied people.

Being **STRONG** is a personal choice. It begins in the mind. When you decide that being strong is who and what you are about, your body will follow. You will always have the motivation and the desire to lift heavy weights, to sprint, to run, to challenge yourself.

It will never be "too early" or "I'm too tired" for you. You will take pride in being different and most of all, you will take pride in being strong in mind, body, & spirit. The spirit is the place where the mind and body can't go. It is where your inner warrior takes over.

This is where you understand what it means to Live The Code. Living The Code embodies honesty, integrity, commitment, & work ethic.

Honesty begins with yourself. Only you know, deep down, if you are doing your best, giving everything your all, and not half-assing the effort.

Integrity is doing the right thing when nobody is looking. This is part of your warrior spirit. You're not working hard or doing your best to impress anyone. Do it for yourself first & foremost. When you take initiative to be strong on your own, no matter who approves or not, no matter who is looking or not, you become a stronger person for those closest to you.

Commitment. Training is not just about lifting weights. There is a greater commitment required if you truly want to achieve success in your training, a type of success that carries over to your life beyond the weights.

If you're supposed to train and "life happened" that day — You got out of work late, you didn't get much sleep the night before because you're a new parent, or you were up late meeting deadlines for work — it doesn't matter. Your commitment helps you rise above all the excuses that would cause "normal people" to crumble under and instead, you thrive and conquer the obstacles that dare stand in your way. You get the job done. You get the training in. If you do something, then you are to be **ALL** in.



Work Ethic. If you have trouble understanding work ethic, then reread this book. Read any book by a Navy SEAL and you will learn to understand that nothing worthy or great is achieved unless you are willing to bust your butt to make it happen.

Don't let anyone tell you differently. To achieve big success in training and in life requires that you Live The Code to the fullest: Honesty, Integrity, Commitment and Work Ethic.



Coupled with hard work should certainly be smart work. Don't waste your time doing the wrong things or being around the wrong people. Anything that

brings you down or hurts you is a red flag for you to move onward and upward.

I will leave you with this. At the forefront of your mission in training and in life must always be your WHY? If you ever Question yourself or get lost along the way, review your WHY and get back on track. This might mean you need a new coach or a new group of people to be around. Your environment is key and your WHY is the foundation and driving force to keep you kicking ass and taking names.

I want to thank you for trusting me to help you with your training and your life's success. You invested in this book, and I truly put my heart & soul into it. I hope you read it many times, over and over again, just as I have read my favorite, most influential books over and over again.

If we ever cross paths, please don't hesitate to say hello to me. It would be my pleasure to shake your hand and meet you in person. I was never pegged for being "that guy" who would go on to achieve success in life. I broke the mold, and it started with not listening to the naysayers.

"There are those that do And those that don't Those that will And those that won't"

— Tom Platz



I believe in you and now you must believe in yourself and follow up that belief with Living the Code and doing the necessary work it takes to achieve success.

One of my favorite quotes that hung in front of the squat rack at Diamond Gym next to an old school pics of Tom Platz squatting heavy and bending a bar said this:

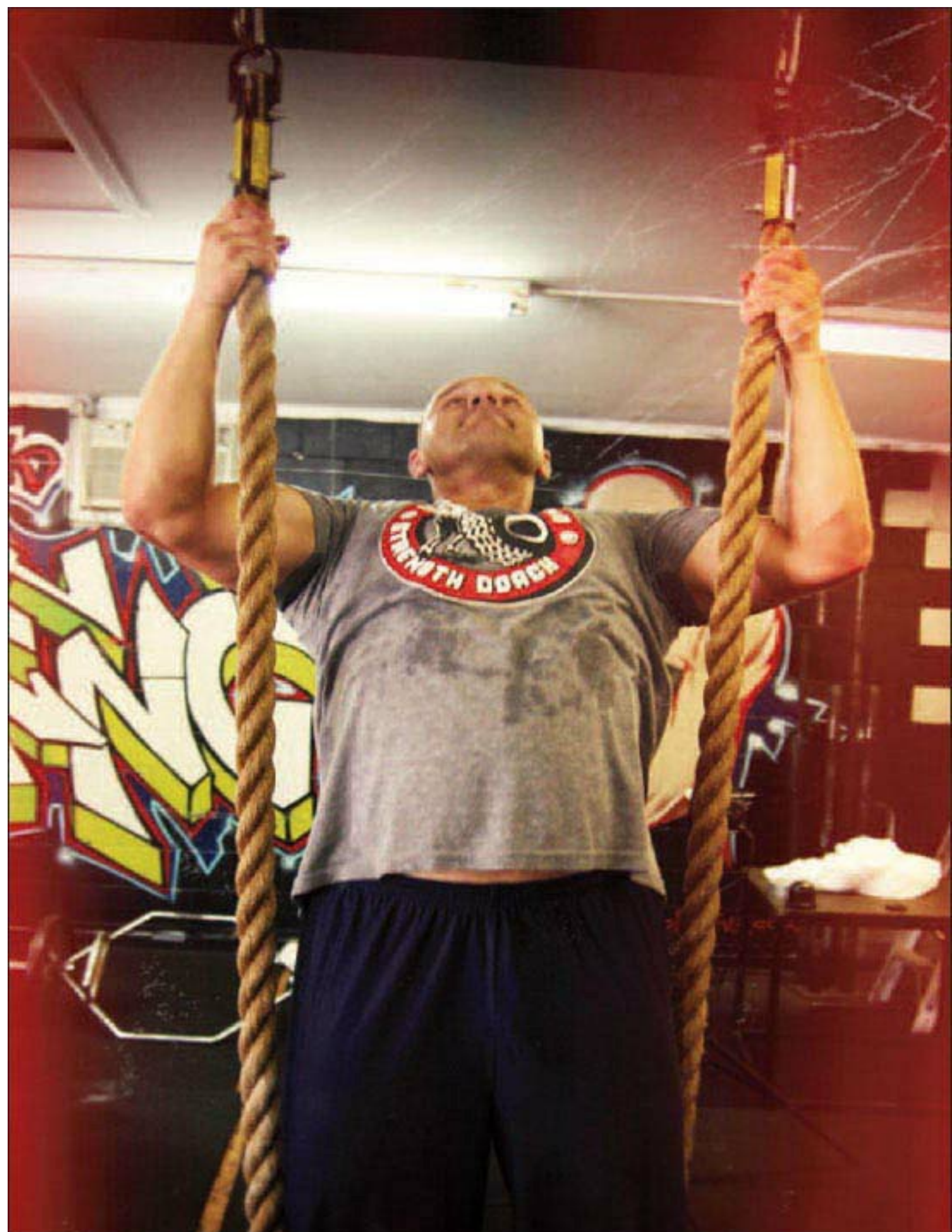
I believe you are one of those who will do the work required to kick ass and take names in life and lifting!

Till the next time....

Live The Code,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, appearing to read 'Zach Even-Esh'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'Z' and a long, horizontal tail.

Zach Even - Esh



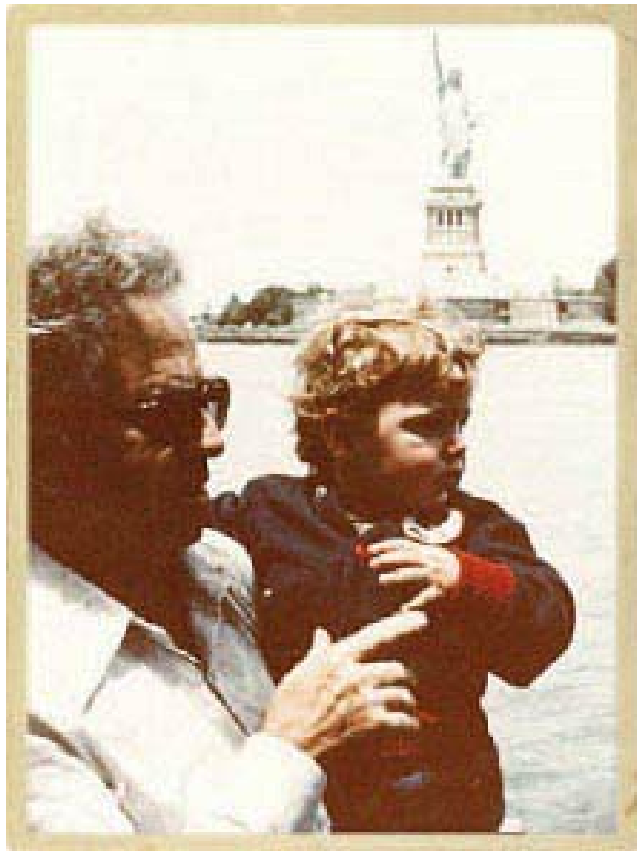
— ABOUT THE AUTHOR —

I was born on December 4, 1975 in Israel. My first and middle name are both named after 2 of my Grandfather's brothers, who were lost to the concentration camps.

At 11 months of age my family moved to the states. At the time, it was my older brother, myself and my parents. I learned to walk on the plane while flying from Israel to NY.

We moved to the Bronx and lived there for a few years before moving to Fords, NJ and eventually, Edison, NJ, where I spent almost 30 years of my life.

Every few years we would go to Israel and I would live with my Grandparents. When I was younger, a few times my Grandparents flew to NJ and spent time with us.



My grandfather holding me at the statue of liberty from July 1977.

 *The most influential person in my life has always been my Grandfather, who we called Saba. To say he was the most loving, most hard working man would be a severe understatement.*

My Grandfather is one of the biggest reasons behind me finishing this book. In fact, this book almost never came to fruition.



Before John Du Cane and Dragon Door supported me, I was introduced to and worked with a different book publisher.

When my schedule didn't fit with their schedule, my assigned co author quit. He gave up completely and bailed out. I was left with over 2,000 photos and for a week or so I had no clue what step I would take next.

I was about to give up and write another ebook instead, using all the photos I purchased from the initial author. Instead of seeing this as an obstacle, I saw this as a new opportunity to do something even better.

I remember thinking to myself, that if I quit, it would haunt me for a lifetime.

I also felt that by quitting, I would be letting down my athletes and my family. Quitting was simply NOT acceptable.

My athletes that helped me and gave up their time during our 3 day photo shoot in the 100 degree weather would have been let down. There was absolutely no valid excuse for giving up.

I thought about my Grandfather and his incredible work ethic and his love and commitment for his family. It inspired me to turn this book from a basic "How to" book into a book that would inspire and change the lives of everyone who read the book. I wanted this to have a life changing effect and nothing less would suffice.

When I talk about being tough or getting tough, it is nothing compared to what my Grandfather went through in his lifetime.

My Grandfather first served in the Polish Army during WW II. During this time, the Polish Army was destroyed very quickly and he escaped to Russia where he was forcefully conscripted into the Russian Army—incredibly, he survived during the war even though Russia was greatly overpowered and outnumbered. Men would go into battle while only 1 out of 10 would have a gun.

When my Grandfather finally returned to Poland after the war, he learned that his entire family was erased in the Nazi concentration camps.

During his return, he meets Savta (my Grandmother) - within 2 months, he meets her father and asks to marry her as they plan to leave Poland to go to Israel. Together, they walked and took trains to Italy. After a year in a refugee camp in Italy, they took a boat across the Mediterranean Sea to Israel.

In Israel, he joins the Haganah, Israel's precursor to the IDF (Israel Defense Force) of today. This was now the 3rd country he served in the military. There are parts of his life that he simply could not share with us, times that were beyond traumatic.



Saba and Savta in Israel.

My Grandfather was a man of countless talents. Without any traditional schooling, he learned Hebrew reading and writing as a child. He was literate in a time and place where most people were not.

Without any traditional or formal schooling, he was able to fluently speak Polish, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish and German. It was amazing to witness him switch from speaking one language to the next when I was with him.

He even learned English when my younger brother, Rami was born.....

He never complained that "he didn't have the money" or "we can't afford that". I never heard him say how tired he was or that something on his body was hurting.

He never owned a car so he walked, rode his bike or took a bus everywhere. I remember he took me to the Doctor while I sat on the back of his bike when I was 7 years old.

Rather than complain about his difficult life, my Grandfather worked 2 to 3 jobs all the time, always different shifts: day, evening and night.

He worked at cement factory and built the majority of his house, which started as a 1 bedroom home and became a beautiful 2 story home surrounded by fruit trees and various rose bushes. Thinking of this home always gives me goosebumps, it was that beautiful.

When I would stay in Israel I would eat the fruits from the trees or my Grandparents would make fresh juices for the kids and wine for my parents from the various trees surrounding their home: grapes, oranges, pomegranates, lemons and mandarin trees

surrounded the house.

I would always see hummingbirds in the garden and in the rose bushes that were all around the house. My Grandfather would always laugh when he told me the story of how my Father and Uncle could never keep up with him as he worked circles around them while building the house after coming home from working the night shift and then he would finish house work and go to his next job.

He also raised chickens, pigeons and ducks in the backyard...

Aside from being the toughest, most hard working man I ever knew...

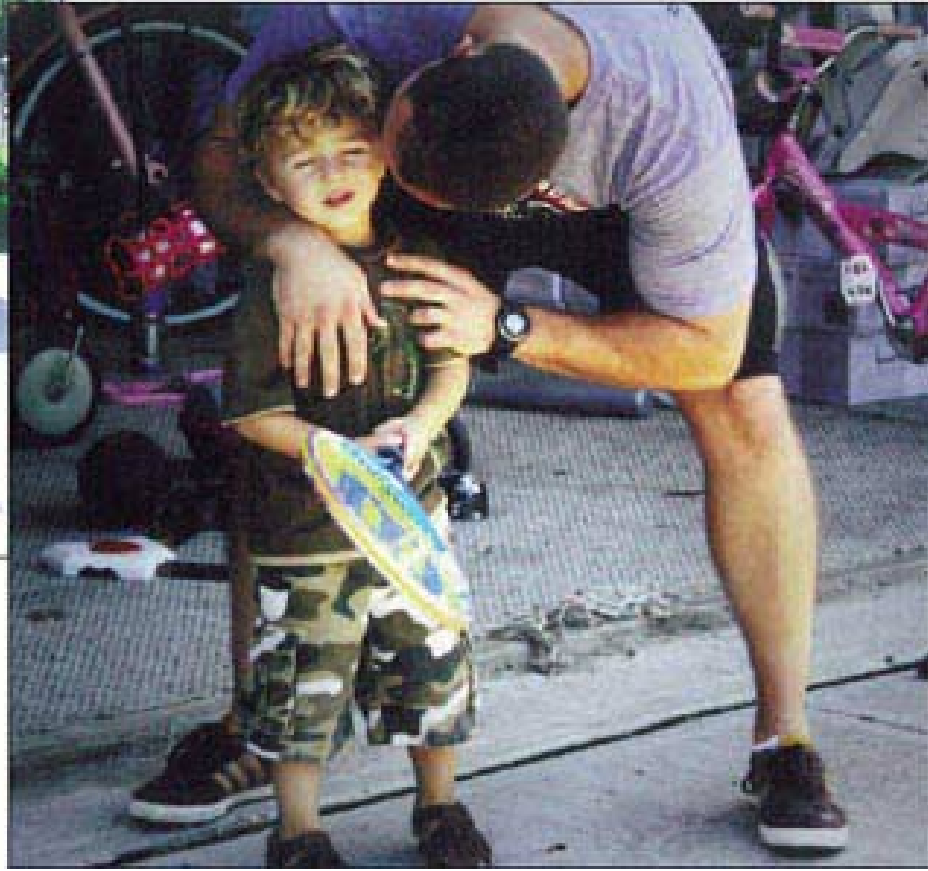
The lesson I learned the most from my Saba was to love my family with all my heart, just as he did. He loved us so much it is indescribable.

I am known and considered by many as one of the best strength coaches in this country. I have worked with hundreds of athletes through my Underground Strength Gym and tens of thousands through my online training courses and consulting.

To be honest, I am honored and proud of those titles but they do not define me.

My simple goal is to be a great father and a great husband, to make my family proud and to love them as much as my Grandfather loved his family.





If I can do that, I will have lived a beautiful life.

My Grandfather never quit and he fought hard for everything, often times with his life on the line and he loved his family with all his heart and more.

Excuses were never used and when I think about my Grandfather it gives me the best frame of reference to understand the way to live.

Being strong is so much more than strong muscles. It is about standing up for what you believe in and for those that you love.

This book is dedicated to my wife, my kids and my family.

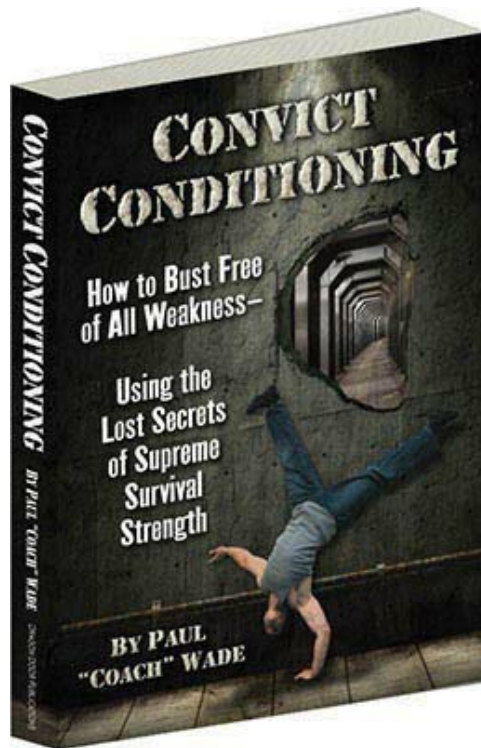
Most of all, this book is dedicated to my Grandfather, who has taught me how to live and how to love.

Jacob Lichtman

March 15, 1920 - November 13, 2004

Live The Code

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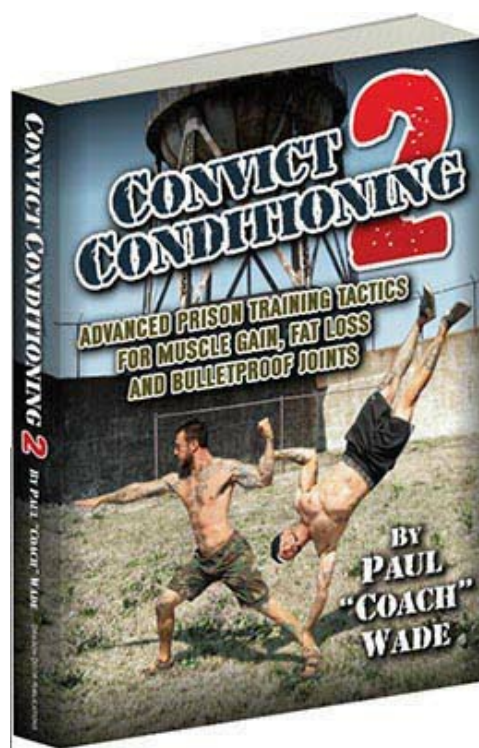


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By Paul "Coach" Wade

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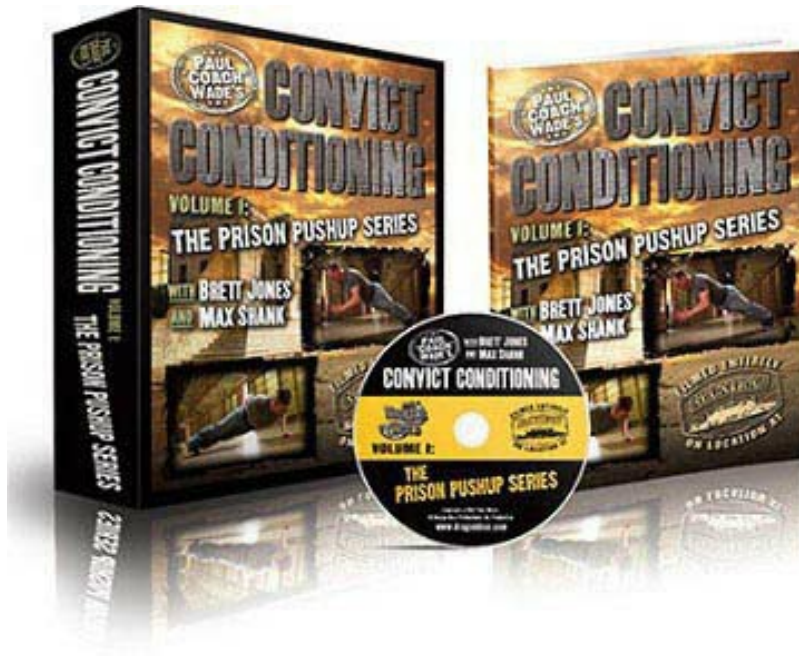


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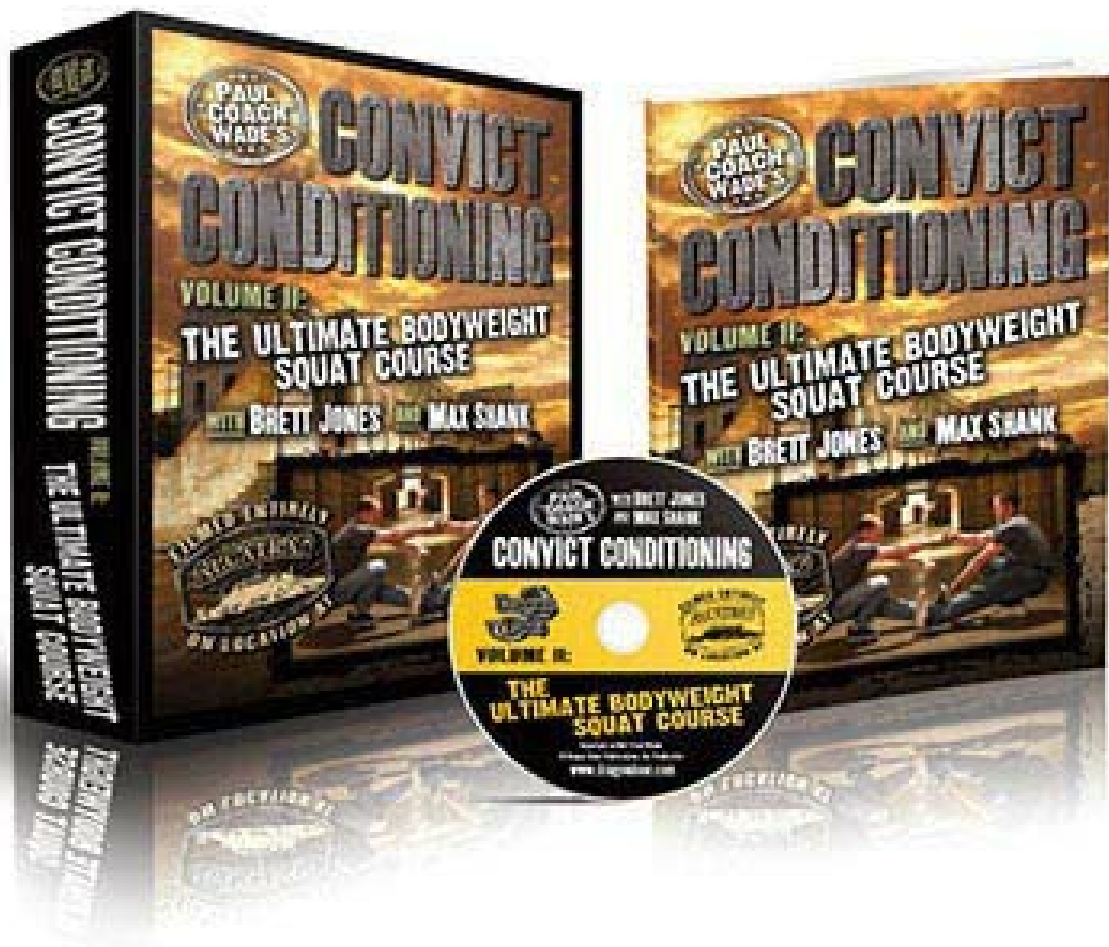
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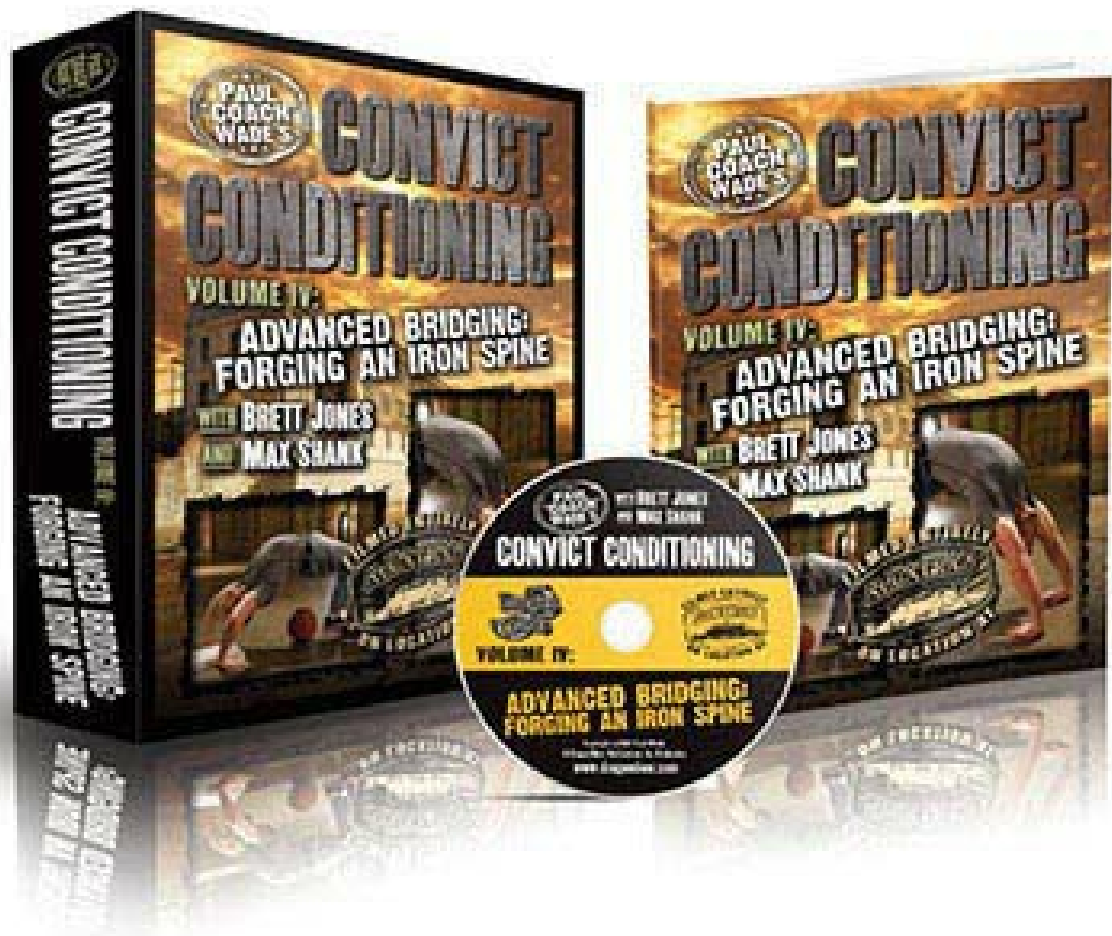
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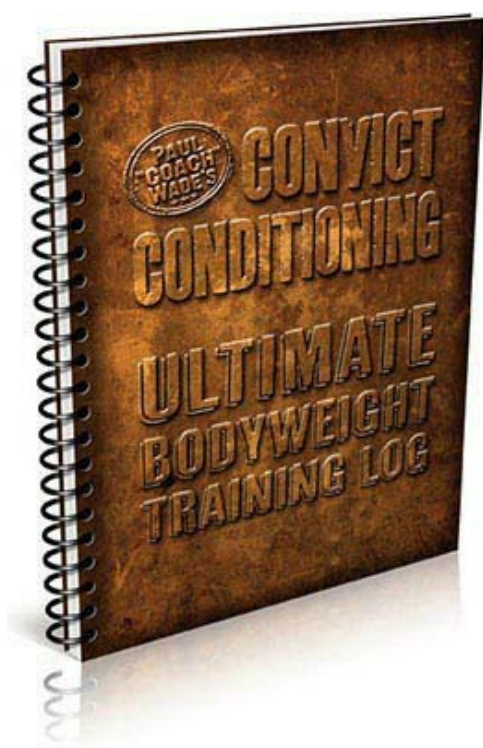


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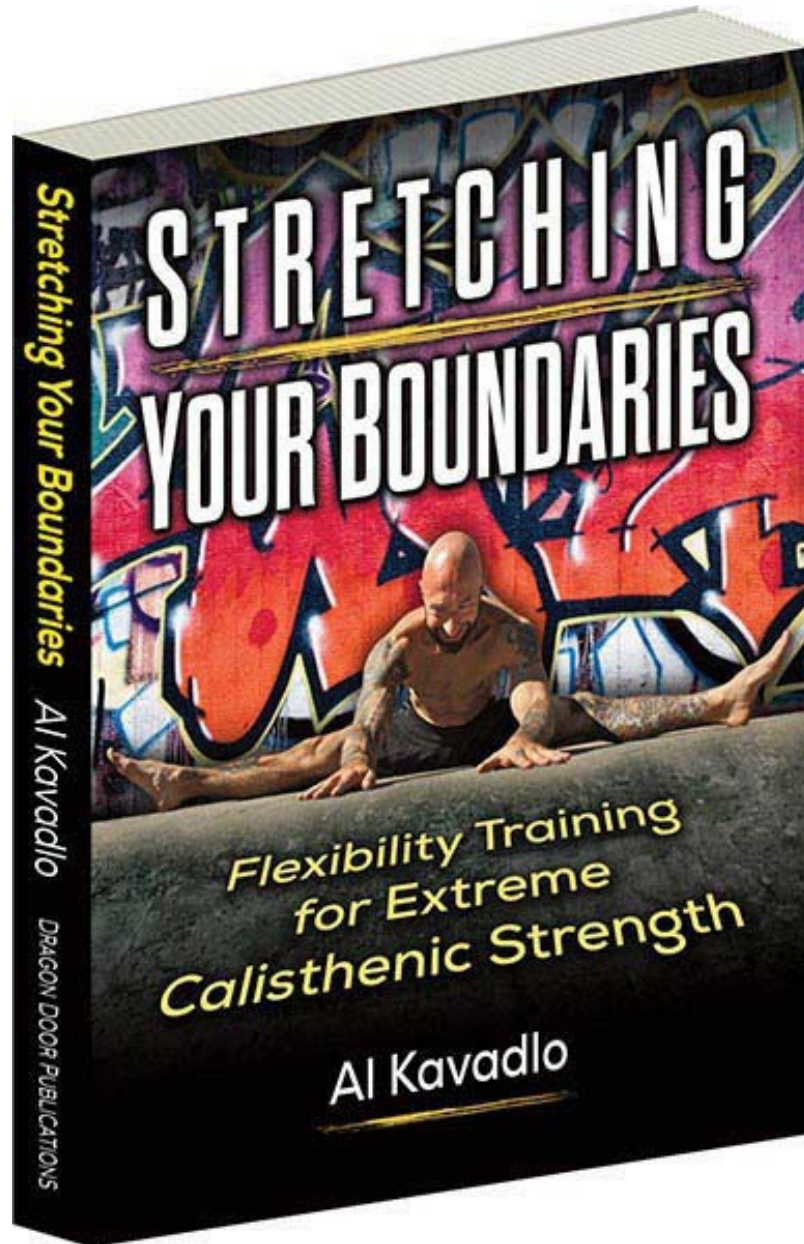
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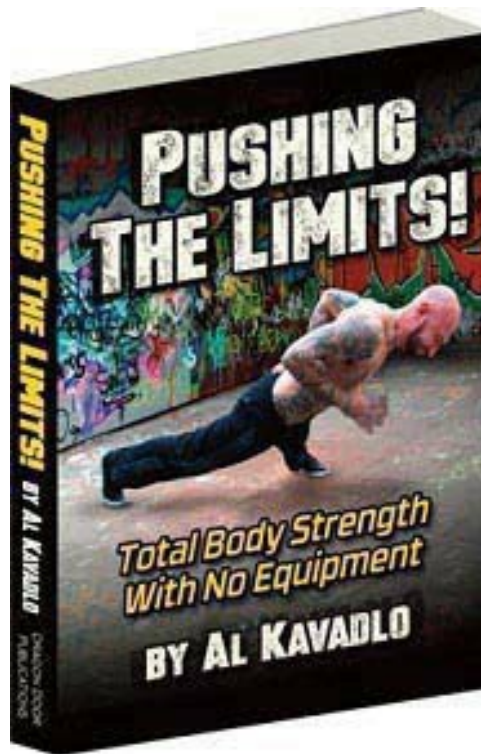
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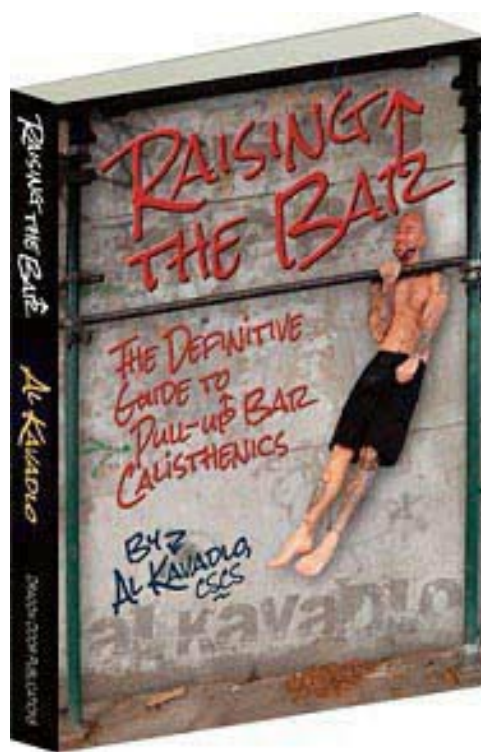
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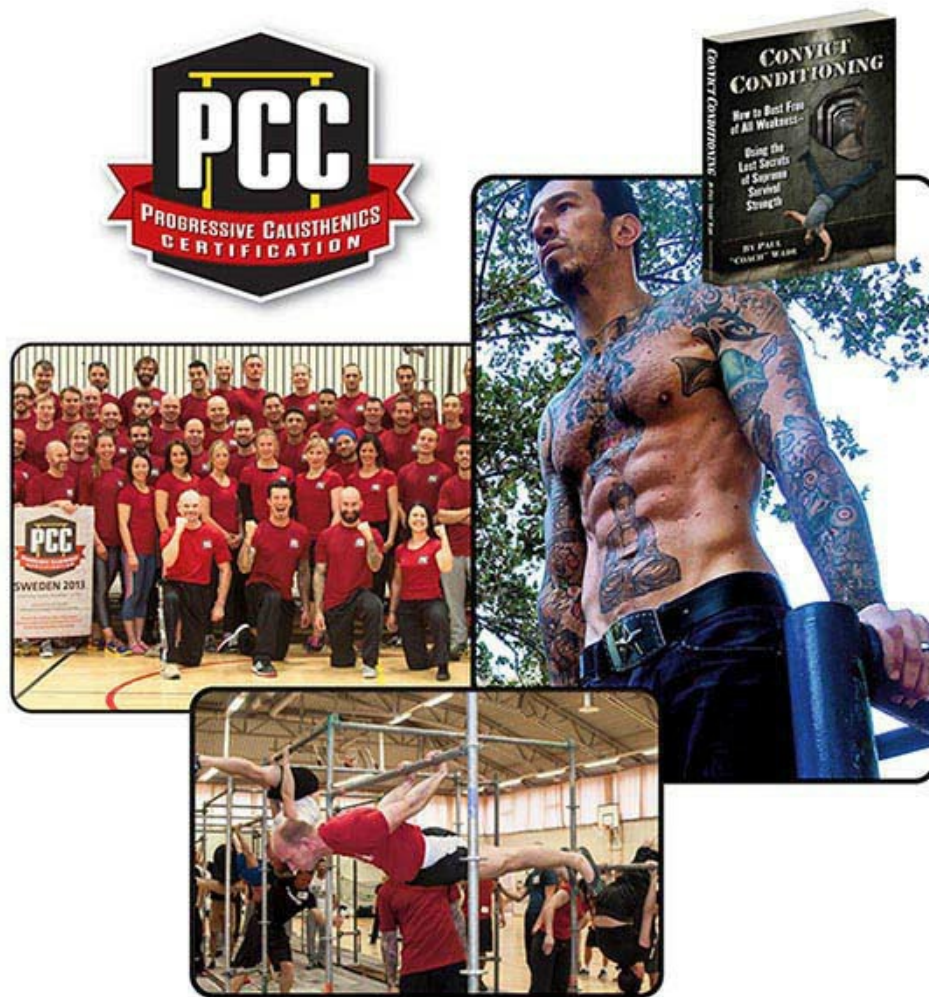


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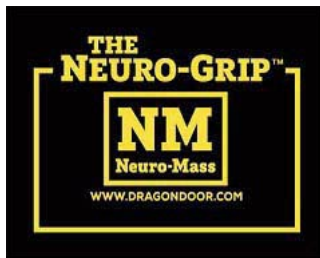
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